



zeroed-out

Tom Corrado









*again, for you . . .*

*You write what you want to write  
in the way that it has to be.*

- Anne Carson

... zeroed-out, we were.

- Anon

A cautionary tale of the imagination  
propels a cold plunge into night  
which ends with back alley anonymous embraces  
down a stairwell ... into the street ...  
notebook jotting your cross-country gambit ...  
The morning after faced head-on  
with words-of-the-day as false eyelashes ...  
and misunderstandings ... playing a part ...  
Yet it did feel good ... almost ...  
filtered as a go-between  
hinged on recording the latest in *Odyssey Tales* ...  
in which faceless extras fed fried chicken  
audition for the part of a modern day Caligula ...  
bipolarity notwithstanding ...  
the meds suffice ... charting clang associations  
and that darn thread through the labyrinth ...  
I am circus ...  
I am three-ring circus ...  
I am four- five- ... six-ring circus ...  
careful, of course, in the derangement ...  
The requisite basic disorientation  
and the need to temporarily unshackle the mind  
from ordinary semantic logic ...  
There is absolutely nothing fortuitous about this ...  
It's here somewhere ... it has to be ... I just know ...  
Wind chimes ... catching the blizzard's tail ...  
and you ... journaling your odyssey ...  
now in its nth year ...  
worrying the lines ... that deepen  
with every footnote ...  
nostalgic for the look you had  
at the beginning of the New Millennium ... aka Y2K ...  
Do you regard past playaphiles with a smile? ...

Should you? . . . You're asking me? . . .  
You paid the price for their best behavior . . .  
You made the best call . . .  
We all make the best call . . . in the moment, yes? . . .  
when roads diverge . . .  
and the photomontage of smiling faces . . .  
*Smiling Faces Sometimes* . . .  
*Smiling Faces Sometimes* . . . pretend . . .  
The Temptations, yes? . . . Psychedelic Soul . . .  
The Wayback Machine . . . back to the '70s . . .  
If they can do it . . . I can do it . . .  
with Jack in the Beanstalk's goose laying golden  
eggs on your face . . . after-hours clubbing  
seals . . . awaiting their ship . . .  
brimmed with henna intimacy . . .  
and the dead silence of phony phone numbers . . .  
Who knew? . . . Certainly not you? . . .  
Then the stumbling began . . .  
the eyeliner underlined with stilettos  
and role confusion . . .  
Erik - son of Erik - Erikson's *Moratorium* . . .  
and the hiatus . . .  
I retreat . . . into my children . . .  
I am my children . . .  
I become my children . . .  
I become untouchable . . .  
I accept my sentence . . .  
my paragraph . . . the entire book . . .  
a cautionary, confessional tale of two people . . . me . . .  
A fly in my eminent domain . . . or a cockroach . . .  
or a pole-sitter . . . or dog-walker for that matter . . .  
I suppose it would take a village, yes? . . .  
Kiosks awash with how-tos . . . and instructions  
for un-dancing . . . tipping the valet  
who tripped on his way back to the Wayback Machine  
with lines from *Proof*:



*Let X equal the quantity of all quantities of X*  
*Let X equal the cold*  
*It is cold in December.*  
Gwyneth Paltrow trading eights with Hannibal Lector . . .  
Armpit hair be damned . . .  
it all boils down to goop, yes? . . .  
He/she got Kerouwhacked brainstorming . . .  
or barnstorming . . .  
or talking through the walk-through  
or walkabout or walkout . . .  
The steps of a proof are murky.  
The steps of a proof are snarky.  
The steps of a proof are nestled all snug in their beds.  
Let X equal their beds.  
And then someone took a shine to someone  
and that someone opened it up to someone else  
and now someone will have to take the hit . . .  
Always looking the other way . . .  
as if a periscope popped up in the Middle Ages . . .  
your middle ages . . . when your juke joints  
began stiffening with a creaking  
that shook you awake at three AM  
speed dialing your doc  
who was on the third hole . . . teeing off . . .  
thinking about Lexi,  
his daughter's jodhpur'd friend from riding class  
but first, do no harm . . .  
You're not waiting for the phoniness to end, are you? . . .  
Please tell me you're not . . .  
Please tell me you've handed in the assignment  
and that you're OK with the seating chart  
and with Einstein's definition of insanity  
instagrammed by iGens or Y2Kers or GenZs  
or whatever they're called . . .  
many of whom sport Muffy's Lean Cuisine gap-toothed grin  
after she was bad-touched by Dilbert,

the animated crossing guard . . .  
super heavyweight xboxer . . .  
regular contributor to Emojipedia . . .  
awaiting the release of his feel-good single,  
*I Just Wanted to be Friendd on Facebook* . . .  
And now what? . . . The neighborhood clown  
has just trotted out his/her yoga mat  
and is about to contort in full view of a selfie stick  
which have been shown to transmit STDs  
when you ignore your mother's warning  
to never leave the house  
without wearing clean underwear . . .  
The day . . . overcast and strangely industrial . . .  
armpit saddlebags  
with full-blown cholesterophobia . . .  
tipping the go-between  
to encapsulate time and attendance . . .  
rehearsing the commonplace  
three standard deviations above the mean . . .  
Have I been duped into thinking  
there will be another? . . .  
All this posthumous posturing, pshaw . . .  
Back then, I suppose it mattered . . .  
But now with deadbeats in ascendance, forget it . . .  
An octopus-in-training inking nonsense syllables  
itching with false promises . . . instagrammed with  
time-outs . . .  
insinuating itself into the best of times  
when no one was looking . . .  
How so, you ask? . . .  
I am filled with the music of DakhaBrakha  
a Ukrainian group I first heard  
on an NPR Tiny Desk Concert . . .  
The preferred costume of flâneurs? . . .  
Flannel shirts of course flapping on clotheslines . . .  
Could be the beginning of a novella . . .

where readers cut to the chase and regret doing so . . .  
Reading between the lines . . .  
you backstroke beyond the breakers  
as if in a scene from *Beneath the 12-Mile Reef* . . .  
CinemaScoped and soundtracked with a little help from  
Terry Riley's *In C* . . .  
And now, ladies and gentlemen, the last line . . .  
the one-trick pony has vanished . . . with just enough time  
on the clock for some to call it a miracle . . .  
Moments like these when you feel adrift:  
you're here; you're not here . . .  
your life . . . a novella . . . or flash fiction . . .  
soundtracked by dissonance  
as if beguiled by harpies  
in the palms of pallbearers . . .  
You wake with the urge to use  
the phrase in the know . . .  
As misdirection, perhaps? . . . Consolation? . . .  
You enter the fray  
disabling the tried and true  
with the words of oglers  
vying for redacting . . . and blueness . . . again . . .  
Which would you rather be? . . .  
Plotting the next stage of your odyssey  
jump-starts ring-tailed fantasies from your days  
in the driver's seat when you squiggled  
for all you were worth . . . minus shipping . . .  
Rent-A-Mine remains an option, yes? . . .  
Spit-shining Crocs on those days when your tinnitus  
chimes in may bring relief to those signed up  
for your tour into the heart of darkness . . .  
which continues to beat more than  
one hundred thousand times a day . . .  
in an ongoing quest for the eternal sunshine  
of the ambient mind . . . where partying morphs  
into a stone-faced commitment

on the deck of the Nellie and you toggle  
understudies . . . trading tasty tidbits  
for the something-or-other of strangers in full view . . .  
Again, the denominator rears its hazy head . . .  
A toxic flamboyance . . . waving a pinwheel . . . approaches  
the stage . . .  
where lines will be drawn with mechanical pencils  
by mannequins in see-through outerwear . . .  
The problem of translation, yes? . . .  
Zeroing-out the counters . . . that sort of thing . . .  
while just above the fill-line  
you spot the missing pieces . . .  
the missing persons . . . and play through the midpoint  
with nothing in mind but the failed endgame . . .  
You are ticketed for going all the way  
on a one-way street  
in Chapter 18 of *Finnegans Wake*  
channeling *Here Comes Everybody* . . .  
a borderline personality . . .  
happy only when pissed . . .  
You hail an Uber and begin recording . . .  
hurrying nothing into memory . . .  
backstory pushing through the glass ceiling  
dumping you into a seance  
with Emily Dickinson voiceover'd by Terrence Davies . . .  
Why do passersby do that? . . .  
Do what? . . .  
Insert sleeved DVDs . . . barcode windowed . . .  
into envelopes for return? . . .  
No idea . . . closure, maybe? . . .  
afraid to leave something undone? . . .  
You spend too much time in an atelier  
taking the wheel from court-appointed best-selling  
ceramicist Edmund de Waal . . .  
Even the Silk Road to clubs in Staten Island  
has traps, pitted as it is with indiscretions . . .

and jabberwocky . . . But I do so like to grope . . .  
Yes, . . . and? . . . And I cameoed in Chapter 3  
of *Psychotherapy for Dummies* . . .  
giving head notes to a phrenology prof . . .  
I aced the course . . .  
You need to take a few days off . . .  
Of course there are other matters . . .  
but that's for later . . .  
Right now I'm not sure . . . where . . .  
If anything you can continue with pin spotting . . .  
A minor miracle has come to the fore  
and with it several outlandishments . . .  
There's always room for more,  
someone said . . . I'm sure . . .  
Look . . . you're the one for this . . .  
The clandestine underpins will go undocumented . . .  
and unnoticed . . . for the most part . . .  
It's someone else's bailiwick, anyway . . .  
someone else's Pilates routine . . .  
Just the other day, in fact, if I'm not mistaken . . .  
Indeed, you've been snapping pics for decades . . .  
as unparalleled moments monopolized  
your unique features . . .  
Auditioning for the part of valet  
on the street of unparked cars  
you spin tales of wild nights . . . wild nights . . .  
silencing intimations of parochialism . . .  
taking back memories of back seats  
on bridges seen at dawn  
from windows in apartments of unknown comics  
whose eye contact is part of their shtick . . .  
One-liners dressed to the nines . . .  
on stages set exponentially . . . in powers of ten  
by the enormously well-read  
clutch one-way tickets  
to what some call Palookaville . . .

just off the boardwalk in Atlantic City ...  
a city tied to your DNA with lemons  
ripe for squeezing beneath cano'd trench coats ...  
Are you still struggling with clarity? ...  
Trafficking in hidden agendas with day-glo paint  
misses the point ...  
Restorative innocence quells the spirit ...  
and makes playing modal à la Bill Evans  
an eye-patch drama  
as if licking the clothing off the fresco'd figures  
on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel ...  
awakening the bloom of lilacs ...  
tweaking photos to edit the story  
you want Facebook friends to commit to memory ...  
Hanning it up ... 20, 30, 40 years ago ...  
Your co-han now gone, yes? ...  
his smile ... an afterthought ...  
Why now the disambiguation  
of shouldering the burden as we stumble along with  
the happiness? ... sadness? ... indifference? ...  
of posting the past? ...  
I am just past pedaling ...  
appropriating deep-throat lyrics for an avatar  
aging out of a forgotten storyboard ...  
Not trying has become the whole plan ...  
and nothing but, yes? ...  
Your Likert-type scale with its even number of anchors  
renders fence-sitting impossible ...  
Not that anyone cares ...  
Auditions for Player-of-the-Month continue ...  
The constant gardener ...  
The reassignment of persons places things ...  
You are reassigned ... elsewhere ...  
You apply for a sabbatical ... to study ins-and-outs ...  
redactions ...  
Expungements like a good neighbor ...

The bus stations of your odyssey morph  
into empty rooms . . .  
Mannequins appear . . . and color-code themselves . . .  
to fit in . . .  
Implied otherness . . . is not an oft-used phrase . . .  
Quickly, the storm of texts arrives . . . uninvited . . .  
Reading the odd numbered chapters . . .  
evenly spaced . . . is one way to go . . .  
Questions from past players . . . hoping to score . . .  
choke your answering machine . . .  
Your mother appears and orders a chunk of suet  
for Golabki . . .  
Porcelain-skinned Angela, the store owner's wife,  
reaches across the counter . . . with a piece of fruit . . .  
The window showcases bound, hanging cheeses . . .  
their sharpness . . . the entrapment of memory . . .  
squeezing through the fence . . . dealing . . . or not . . .  
A Proustian moment as joie de vivre . . .  
Instead a foray into electronic music . . .  
You make do with the acoustics . . .  
The true through kicks it up a notch  
along the canal of your second chapter  
which is pretty much good to go . . .  
A low thin cloud invades the recording studio . . .  
Again, the emptiness . . .  
with a dark function that takes on the late '80s  
as if you have isolated the indexes  
which hold the order of players  
as listed in the credits . . . which keep rolling . . .  
There's really nothing to do here . . .  
Does this ring a bell? . . .  
Recall the boardwalk . . . and the hookups  
when everyone smoked or seemed to . . .  
You made sure the sidings were empty . . .  
The inexplicable explained in the margins  
of chapbooks that have taken flight

as a way to appropriate images  
from Facebook friends . . .  
Squeezing through the mirror  
in the fun house  
is a fun thing to do on days when footnotes fail . . .  
Do you feel as obligated as you once did? . . .  
You telling me about your expertise  
or what you took to be your expertise . . .  
You certainly had your share  
of forgotten moments . . .  
when out of the blue you received applications  
for the position you had yet to advertise . . .  
It's all in the business cards, I guess . . .  
A good thing you insisted on photo IDs . . .  
The incidental music proved a fascinating backstory . . .  
One that held the listener . . .  
and prompted most to order seconds . . .  
You have become a gardener of time  
refusing to admit to theory . . .  
to the notion of passage . . .  
balancing world views on a pinhead  
while cataloging the entrails of happenstance . . .  
Hopes, dreams, paradigms, yes? . . .  
come together as a resolution of sorts . . .  
of elements of style . . . of chance . . .  
the harmonics of each breath . . .  
the sound deafening . . . as you confront silence . . .  
unable to contribute anything as spellbinding . . .  
as emptiness . . .  
On the phone with a ventriloquist . . .  
imagining his/her unmoving lips . . .  
the script - fully formed - trotting across the stage  
the lighting subdued . . .  
you decide to rebuild the equation  
to reduce the gap . . . the inequity . . .  
as if jargon were the reason . . .



Pick a time and a place ... that's it ...  
You will know your lines ...  
Five stars ... if that means anything ...  
Intact ... tweaking the past ...  
prefiguring the future, yes? ...  
Credentialed of course  
for those who trust the certificate ...  
On the beach in full-dress rehearsal ...  
reaching for the gold ring  
the merry-go-round anything but ...  
wooden horses stuffed with players  
jostling for a taste of the imagination ...  
Your offering scanned ...  
Why the strange nomenclature? ...  
Why now with the betting windows closed  
and all eyes on the disguise? ...  
I too had no idea it was an enormous pity  
what with the domino-effect in effect  
being force-fed the far-fetched rationale ...  
You get what you pay for, yes? ...  
Instead of musing over unwritables  
you conjure an upper playground of happenstance  
illuminated by naked citrus fruits ...  
stand-ins for understudies ...  
This will have to do ... for now ...  
Bad decisions again slept in the car  
somehow skirting the inevitable  
reworked into the script ...  
There's really nothing that can be done  
with the extended family  
preparing for a voyage that may prove problematic ...  
We'll have to weather that as well, yes? ...  
Try to bring it full-circle  
not unlike the past when you bumped into the future  
at a kiosk ...  
It took your breath away ...

You continue to believe in the words as transcribed . . .  
Nothing wrong with that . . .  
I too will play the options . . .  
Who knows what we will find in the emptiness  
after the credits? . . .  
You are lavish in the security of between-line labyrinths  
obliterating bedpost notches as if rewriting  
oxymorons . . . while Hallmarkian tributes  
fester in a siding . . .  
You trained your voice to ignore  
the embellishments dripping from the rafters  
where has-beens scramble for long balls  
with gestures that make the evening news . . .  
Why is keyboarding so difficult? . . .  
Wait, let me try this . . . OK, that's better . . .  
You said it yourself . . . though I'm at a loss  
for what it was exactly . . . but who cares  
if most things are not spot-on? . . .  
Don't you just love that phrase? . . .  
The polymorphous morning drenches . . .  
Someone somewhere whistles . . .  
soundtracking your journey into the afternoon's summit  
where signposts await crayons  
and we can spend a few moments dancing away  
our hearts and souls . . .  
Listen . . . do you hear it? . . .  
The script! . . . My kingdom for a script! . . .  
Again dredging up the dramaturgical model? . . .  
Please, don't drop Goffman's name . . .  
Without which you would be at a loss  
for describing the dogeared pages  
of your little black book . . .  
the doggerel of your little black dress . . .  
Irrespective of something or other . . .  
I think I know what you meant  
when you said what you said . . .

Confronting the silence at 3 AM . . .  
We made new with old . . . and waited for the shore  
to be washed along with the others . . .  
Funny how things slip into cereal boxes  
without much effort  
(eight ball into the corner pocket) . . .  
You were there when he/she dropped the ball  
but proceeded nonetheless to run without it . . .  
How ridiculous! . . . Disrobing in a fitting room . . .  
Taking care to wipe off the counter  
before the guests arrived . . . to speak in tongues . . .  
*Why so serious?* . . .  
This must be a transcription, yes? . . .  
You are in the throes of minions . . .  
wishing for a timeout . . .  
And now look who's here . . .  
Are you kidding with those accoutrements? . . .  
You attended the play with an old jar? . . .  
A magician gushed as he/she biked along the boulevard  
where ghosts of past players  
rehearsed on an empty stage  
brinned with elliptical memories . . .  
Irresponsible and aimless as an underhanded clock . . .  
You saw the writing in the bread truck at 4 AM  
regurgitating your lines  
as if he/she wanted to hear all about it . . .  
But then, without warning . . .  
You misquote yourself . . . again . . . finding solace  
in the non sequitur . . .  
in the interplay among players . . .  
among onlookers  
who . . . could they have it another way . . . would not . . .  
tapping their fingers  
to your breathing  
as you . . . awaken with asking  
the morning again . . . and again . . . and again . . .

a transubstantiation ...  
of the temporal ... the insignificant ...  
A willingness to look silly stalks you  
with kinky imaginations ... banister games ...  
late-night tete-a-tetes ...  
while you ... on hidden camera ...  
backpedal ... into an off-season valentine  
shopping trip to designer outlets ...  
A soft-spoken train wreck meanders  
into wish-fulfillment  
with instructional video in Jungian tongue ...  
The morning reboots ...  
jousts ... the colors of some flag ...  
Two can play solitaire, yes? ...  
You are this ... that ... this ...  
and that ... nurturing a crudeness into nothing  
less than a bespoke cringing one-act ...  
Your life ... and its iterations ... is out to lunch ...  
shopping for winter boots ... which doubtless will remain  
boxed despite the inevitable shadowing us ...  
the tarts and torts ... the pajama'd players ...  
queuing up to cameo  
in your off-color-coordinated dream ...  
An open question opens to abstraction  
as a day-trader's phish for trinkets  
litters the path with the insistence of hooplas ...  
stanzas rewound to target voyeurs ...  
You again eye the rafters ... as do we all  
and continue ...  
dog-eared how-to manuals offering salvation  
whenever you chime in ...  
Dim the light ... play out the hand ... if you must ...  
That scene with the untied shoe ... pointier  
than I would have imagined  
following it down the hall  
and into the fourth room on the left

with him/her believing in the grandiloquence  
of unpunctuated lives  
that arrive with box lunches to boot ...  
and you fast forwarding to FaceTime ...  
infinitely looped ... costumes  
favoring triple dips ... on triple decks ...  
in triple headers ...  
enigmatic words silenced in bell jars  
bandied in and out of SROs ...  
And where are we, again? ...  
And why am I having trouble remembering  
the prize in the Cracker Jack box?  
the prize from your brief foray into flash fiction?  
The trance-like atmosphere of being short-listed  
surely *en plein air*  
as spellbinding as the watchers at the gate ...  
encumbered with semicolons ...  
A beer and pizza run through a cemetery  
segues to a thought bubble ... filled with nuance  
and dissonant furniture music ... while you  
unfazed by the URLs of unscripted moments  
unfolded ... cranked up ...  
entertain ghosts with headstoned gymnastics  
and comedic extirpations  
linked to incidentals [citation required] ...  
The party's infinitesimal talk prompts a shift  
with unspooled punctuation  
and 20 grannar-like sundries ...  
top bottom ... bottom top ... no hint of the uncommonest  
moments yet to come ... before a patdown of standins  
auditioning for a 2 AM shoot ...  
Your loom of straw men and women as incantations ...  
backroom fist bumps  
with players lining up for takeaways  
which - let's not kid ourselves - are compromised simulacra  
of authentic knockoffs ...

But hey there's nothing wrong with endings that fit ...  
Accessibility is third party ... and the road  
the Wild West ...  
Talking heads feature ... with cauldrons, no less ...  
Stick around ... there's more ...  
When did you say  
you last visited the Palace of Memory? ...  
It can happen ...  
Dealing from the bottom of the Old Maid deck, I mean ...  
Perhaps you are one and the sane, yes? ...  
Know what I mean? ...  
Skip to my Lou ... then tell me  
why you've decided to shadow the alphabet ...  
just in case ... I am before ... and after ... again ...  
Your BFF wants to know the true extent  
of your incalculability ... minus underpinnings ...  
You worry the blurriness of closed circuit  
the 24/7 blurriness  
with newbies meandering in and out of frames ...  
striking poses in  
weblike food courts ... ominous kiosks ...  
yet to be wikipedia'd ...  
Descending into the maelstrom of a mall  
carded with BOGOs  
you continue bluepenciling the first draft  
of your long-awaited collected works  
soon to be short-listed  
despite dead links ... bit players ... and berns  
popping up ... in your wake ...  
in and out of thin air ...  
All tried-and-true, yes? ...  
Of course, there will be moments ... lost moments ...  
moments with voices ...  
infrasound voices ...  
and the seventh function of language  
if you catch my drift ...

Bipolarity 'R' Us ...  
Twittering is speechless ... it goes without saying ...  
Picking through drops ... imagining seriation  
as if happenstance were ritual ...  
The elliptical exuberance of go-betweens  
who chime in at the slightest provocation ...  
It's not the endpoint I imagined ... not at all ...  
Can you please sit still for the  
rapidographic moment? ...  
at least for the tabloid elements  
which jostle themselves senseless? ...  
Most are stuck in enjambments ... for that matter ...  
awaiting mediation ...  
awaiting colorization ...  
Please try to stay within the lines  
or you too will feel the mounting hum ... I mean ...  
Far too many have come forth  
with iridescent confessions from odysseys past ...  
Too late? ... Your momentary lapse is ineffectual  
and will be returned ... you weren't were you? ...  
So ... why now persist in juxtapositions  
when you know ... better than most ... what can happen  
at the water cooler? ... elsewhere? ...  
The repetition ... stifling ... or maybe not? ...  
Dunno! ...  
I've encountered it on my trips outside the strike zone  
with a full count ... and two men on ...  
Keep a stiff upper lip ... Huh? ...  
Reduce the map to palatable units ...  
Then an end run surcease of sorrow ...  
Devil may care or (clause)trophobia ...  
This will be written up and saved as diagonal grannar  
in a foolishly embroidered manner ...  
and added to the menu ... at the last minute ...  
A losing battle? ... Who said that? ...  
Notwithstanding ...

Everyone is getting antsy ... over whatever ...  
The latest release ... edifying! ...  
The imagined consensual ... alive and well  
in afterlife's timeouts ...  
in afterlife's reflections ...  
You become the person you were scripted to become ...  
despite your edits ... your Lottery tickets ...  
your season passes ... your photo ops ...  
There's no telling who will be next in the queue  
that stretches along the potheaded macadam  
back to your *once upon a time* ... taken out  
in the third quarter ... treated with condiments -  
at least they looked the part - and released into a  
bullpen with nose ring and selfie stick ...  
You would have thought the colors ...  
but that wasn't on today's menu ... or in today's cards  
falling like leaves with ramifications for droves of  
peepers ... rewinding the tape ...  
The whole thing innocuous ... losing the unfollowing ...  
the body picking through the remains of the day  
confused by puzzle-me-this ... a vanishing point  
to ask again if this is enough ... if this is enough ...  
Waking with the rain ... texting for balance ... in  
Halloween costume with motorcycle boots ...  
and treasure trove of gandy dancers  
laying track to the outermost house ...  
its windowless room a catalyst for your re-readings  
of open-ended questions submitted by student interns ...  
I will return to this ...  
Post-coital hot tubbing with mannequins  
unleashes half-baked half-overheard conversations  
plagiarized from footnotes of wannabes  
mining cocksure readers  
whose bar-hopping is choked  
with arms, legs, glass eyes, and false positives ...  
Your intrepid unscripted words



continue to trickle into daylight  
while your profile gets a fresh coat of paint  
and your shopping cart checks itself out . . .  
And these are only a few of your favorite things? . . .  
Parenthetical interruptions . . . exhausting . . .  
you try to avoid them  
and marvel at the perfection of the opening line:  
*It's late already, five or five-thirty . . .*  
You concede that the search for meaning  
is senseless . . .  
a convex mirror type of phenomenon . . . as jarring  
as verbal abstraction when playing hangman . . .  
What about transitions? . . .  
Rarely abrupt . . . and this I guess is good . . .  
You have been known to confuse yourself . . .  
and others . . .  
There is some solace, however, in putting on an overcoat  
reeking of a story critiqued by oddsmakers . . .  
And what does it remind you of? . . .  
It may take a while, with all the red tape,  
but rest assured, it will happen . . .  
say the informants . . . most of whom would flounder  
in a stream of consciousness . . .  
I'm stuck in a paraphrase . . . your paragraph  
a faux antidote . . . capturing moments coalescing  
at the bottom of a black hole . . .  
Dealmaker or dealbreaker? . . .  
The endpoint the same, yes? . . .  
I mean when was the last time you considered  
the combination of letters headbutting you  
as we speak . . . or . . . as we try to communicate  
with signage? . . . To dawdle in such dress  
as they are used to wear, indeed! . . .  
Forget that it's all there . . .  
all the remnants of your odyssey  
when you were given a second chance

to guide the motorcycle through the cones  
set out by the Emperor of Ice Cream . . .  
The insincerity of huge red clown shoes trips up  
your lip-sync of David Bowie's *Oh You Pretty Things* . . .  
as foreign tongues dip into bowls of chowder  
laid out with candy-ass smiles  
and free tickets to movie theaters  
featuring blank screens  
awaiting flash-in-the-pan fictional lives . . .  
Bicycling figure-eights between goalposts  
with sustain pedal engaged . . .  
the buffering . . . the artisanal teas . . .  
the Nabokovian butterflies pinned with day  
passes to wooded paths  
strewn with incomplete sentences . . .  
It's all shtick, yes? . . .  
Wandering lonely as a cloud pits you against bulls  
in china shops with intricate archways  
spelling out the history of underground go-betweens . . .  
You have a knack for note-taking  
which bodes well for fine-tooth combing the intricacies  
of personal spaces known only to others  
once removed . . .  
You will be called upon . . . I just know it . . .  
The internal disarray has become less troubling, yes? . . .  
The storm impends . . .  
its wheels out of sync with the Zeitgeist . . .  
And you, forking pasta on a flurried afternoon  
in late November, chat up kinetic theater  
with changelings hiding in Jane Austen's lines . . .  
But what of the small dairy-farming communities  
whose zigs and zags call less  
for explanation than for diagnosis? . . .  
Are they fodder for your tweets  
or for your unreasonable notebook? . . .  
Take for instance the gestural brush strokes

or the old typewriter font with its enigmatic nothingness  
catching purchase with casting calls  
while a restorer guesses Leonardo . . .  
repaints the entire background ivory-black  
and raises the bar to \$450 million . . .  
We await befuddlement . . .  
It will come . . . as offshore Evinrudes take turns . . .  
I am aghast . . . at something . . .  
You appeared unruffled at the dress rehearsal  
running the gauntlet of valets wielding remotes . . .  
I found it hard to believe that replacements  
were forbidden . . .  
The whole thing was chancy, but exciting, yes? . . .  
You made a go for it but ended up staring  
at snowflakes through the window of his/her bedroom  
filled with rococo . . . which I must say says it all . . .  
The elegant attentions were, at least for the moment,  
a recognition of deferral  
despite the extended warranty . . .  
You did opt for that, didn't you? . . .  
Your naivete cranked to eleven you declaimed  
that you had inherited the silliness  
from the French avant-garde . . . which you had been  
introduced to by a substitute teacher in second grade  
whose name was among those listed somewhere . . .  
By that I mean treading water . . .  
You know, to tread water . . . as praxis . . .  
But then, he/she was disheveled . . .  
jaywalking . . . and moments later . . . entered a CVS . . .  
as if subscribing to the notion  
that everything can be tabled . . .  
should be tabled . . .  
Equations . . . and what have you . . .  
The passivity will eventually get to you  
but I feel a kind of obligation . . .  
a sense of commitment . . . notwithstanding . . .

Why did you stick that in? . . .  
No idea . . . perhaps equivalence . . .  
the awareness of defiance . . .  
A tad heavy handed, yes? . . .  
I've lost the sense of comma-placement . . .  
But what about de-composing . . . a poem, for example,  
as if from across the room the mirror images  
of yes and no? . . .  
You think infinite . . . bundled with song as a way out . . .  
as an escape route . . .  
the narrative color-coded for easy access . . .  
the point of view . . .  
again, an empty room . . . filling with strangers . . .  
The neighborhood unwilling to disgorge a parking space  
though in such moments one sometimes stumbles upon an  
area of respite . . .  
a wilted exemplar of geologic time . . .  
Elsewhere . . . the obvious . . . or not so . . .  
to make it sound as if it had just been thought up . . .  
An 18-wheeler's list of gritty demands  
rear-ends your odyssey  
as underperformers face the dilemma of Cup or Core . . .  
Eyeshadowed eyes follow in the afterglow  
of first-come first-serveds . . .  
Omissions make worthwhile the feel-good . . .  
as it gushes . . . strangely satisfying . . .  
with only-child enthusiasm . . .  
Buried beneath the paper trail are instructions  
for the real . . .  
which you repress for later parsing  
by the I'll-see-your-twenty-and-raise-you-twenty  
grammarians emeriti who talk more . . .  
but settle for less . . . 50 minutes later . . .  
Choosing tautology to express emptiness  
your erotic other's tacit acceptance  
waits in the wings . . . primping . . . with extras

Uber'd in for the shoot  
for MoMa's *History of Hooking* . . .  
a trailer on the set of *Boardwalk Empire* . . .  
dioramas, day trips, drive-bys, past priors . . .  
You examine the separation  
that informed your odyssey . . .  
an escapist's myopia . . . scheduled to air  
on subsequent Tuesdays in February . . . or March . . .  
with one-night stands costumed as dreams  
of uncooperative dentists retrofitted  
for the unbeaten hometown debating team  
from your up close and personal  
when you were stuck in traffic for over a year . . .  
A yellow submarine's sonar . . . pings . . . somewhere . . .  
with directions to what? . . . last minute specials? . . .  
The oddments are such that we could enjoy the respite  
but this too is back-burnered  
along with notes from *Illuminations* . . .  
Sine waves sign in . . . trigger dance fever . . .  
filling the silence with names . . . faces . . .  
photomontages of parties . . .  
of the first and second part  
emailing jpgs to lovers . . . and other strangers . . .  
Keep the words coming, he/she said . . .  
strolling among the pines . . . on a winter afternoon . . .  
worrying fonts . . . as if the image . . .  
you and I know this . . .  
You've hit an orchestrated snag . . .  
The ancient phobia reappearing  
with Leopardi's *Hodge-Podge* . . .  
Evidently the time was set . . . and now, the retracing . . .  
as in *La Familia de Celilia* . . .  
accompanied by *what if a much of a which of a wind* . . .  
Here's the windup . . . and the pitch (as black as) . . .  
sending it out of the park and into the maelstrom of  
great silence . . .

with hey, diddle, diddle, / the cat and the fiddle . . .  
with the cats . . . and the fiddles . . .  
at 10 AM on August 12, 1958 . . . Art Kane for Esquire . . .  
Not inclined to venture out into the drifting  
*Silent Snow, Secret Snow* . . . above all . . . a secret . . .  
Thinking - metaphorically - how disturbed one must be  
to do that, yes? . . . But let's not go there . . .  
Who (in fact) killed Cock Robin? . . . circa 1950s . . .  
the black and white Stromberg Carlson and the opening  
scene with Robin's arrow speeding into a tree . . .  
Off-days the string quartet in your back pocket  
is all but played out . . . in three-quarter time . . .  
Exes . . . marking the spot . . . steal second and more . . .  
transposing the theme of *Lassie*,  
chock-full of unclaimed funds . . .  
sitting there . . . festering? . . .  
in the lap of jargon . . .  
with no one worth emailing  
about the sinister drop . . . in temperature . . .  
A pound of something . . .  
Tragedians backed-up at the roundabout  
conjure audience implants  
with places to go . . . people to be . . .  
reworking the boundaries of ancient-Greek mythos  
with aspiring telecommuters . . .  
I brood Bacon's comment about the violence of paint . . .  
What better way? . . .  
Did you think you had thought of everything? . . .  
Your garden is a myth of drones rocking  
in the back seat . . .  
following the dotted line . . . lining up  
for handouts . . . hand-me-downs . . . handsome Johnnies . . .  
Counting to the tenth power . . . within which . . .  
if that's what you want . . .  
The whole truth . . . and nothing but . . .  
tap dancing . . . whistling while you work . . .

taking the long way home . . .  
Your notebook fills with snow . . .  
The world a far-fetched deadline . . .  
indifferent, colorless . . .  
Four score and something . . . a death in the family . . .  
You dream yourself a spotter  
of weight-bearing fantasies . . .  
your dialogue a monologue of graphic comics  
and half-whispered promises laced with  
nonsense syllables . . . You are on top of things . . .  
imagining the world as mirror-image . . .  
improprieties squeezing through the holes  
in your story . . . paper cuts and hypotheticals . . .  
a collage of weak passwords legacied for shadows  
of REM sleep . . .  
The pedagogy of your body sits in the front row . . .  
open-legged . . . anticipating the rapture  
trickling through the web of microphones  
implanted in your flesh . . .  
A garage band of soft stones retraces the images  
of your odyssey drawn by headliners once removed . . .  
You are quick to note the score . . .  
Also-rans crowd the podium . . . circumnavigating locutions  
decked out in the school colors  
texting what can be had of the moment . . .  
The venue virtual . . .  
The commonplace suspect . . .  
You arrive . . . trailing apps . . . as if reinventing the  
obvious . . .  
I am lax . . . and begin paging through . . .  
You footnote the theoretical medieval clothing  
of the new-you . . .  
awaiting your lines to be inscribed in stone . . .  
you insist . . .  
*We are all forgotten . . .*  
It's not as if you chose letter box format . . .

One day it was there . . . piggy-backed on a cold front  
that moved up your arm to your shoulder . . .  
No toggling out of it either . . .  
these manifestos of the body - lyrical experimental  
satirical -  
bringing flu-like symptoms  
unhappiness as prose fragments  
of wellness and illness . . .  
Your sense of odyssey . . . quietly taking shape  
on the corner of an ice storm . . .  
You thought you would spend the day with a Sharpie . . .  
The sad farmhouses in your dreams  
are the stacked-up nightmares of previous lives . . .  
Your distrust of the obvious, yes? . . .  
You ask the remote to select . . . the plotless moment  
when all are suspended  
and someone wheels in the midday  
as if a restart is expected . . .  
far from the principles . . . or principals . . .  
of the madding crowd  
sharpening stubs of pencils  
to prove . . . to no one in particular . . .  
that the river will indeed flow  
in no direction home . . .  
Why bother rescinding the to-do list  
when the day will close black and white? . . .  
The point being well-taken  
by those who are otherwise clueless  
when offered a buyout . . .  
You know this, though, yes? . . .  
You imagine someone listening  
to your delivery . . .  
A smile goes to your head . . .  
and now you're being  
carried along by the irregularities in this latest drama  
which will air



without much of anything . . .  
as soon as . . .  
Something is forcing itself upon you . . .  
Some just cry while they drive . . .  
Surely you can adjust the rate of tumble, yes? . . .  
Imagine, if you will . . .  
But then, try to keep it in the moment . . .  
especially while you plagiarize additional memories . . .  
Now the parsimonious agitation of the rain, yes? . . .  
Downtemp'd . . . the street cradles the day  
when a smile - doing its best - passes  
and you're earwormed . . . Sia's *Destiny* with Zero 7 . . .  
*I lie awake / I've gone to ground* . . .  
Thoughts of Color Me This  
crowd out the other . . .  
*I'm bending time getting back to you* . . .  
Wait . . . wait . . . hit pause . . . I need to rethink this . . .  
*You know exactly what I'm talking about* . . .  
Famously lingering . . . after hours . . .  
with pages of questions pulsing with anticipation . . .  
But what of the rendezvous? . . .  
Surely it will play itself out  
despite the sluggishness of infinitives . . .  
Suppose we consider the portal as a revamp . . .  
as an exegesis of odysseys past? . . .  
Some will soon age out  
but others will doubtless raise a ruckus  
if for no other reason than the discrepancies  
between the script and your play acting . . .  
costume changes notwithstanding . . .  
Yet another sighting of explanatory fiction . . .  
That the current overuse of *bespoke*  
is an example of semantic drift  
triggers memories of warm summer nights  
when you would rehearse unlisted numbers  
with a niggling exactitude . . .

hurling backseat drivers back  
to their *Once upon a time* ...  
The elements of style reeked of insouciance ...  
Little matter though ... your redacted paper trail  
exposed the bellies of the beasts you'd encountered  
as you odyssey'd past the stop signs of endearment ...  
Center stage was occasionally occasioned ...  
You backpedaled as best you could, yes? ...  
with little effort to upstage the obvious ...  
*We're plugging leaks* choruses through most  
of the recital space ...  
This back-and-forth-back-and-forth upends many  
as Valentine's Day swoops down upon a newhire standin  
with Out to Lunch cred ...  
So the analysis continues  
picking through the odyssey's detritus  
undaunted by the future's trailer  
pastiche scenes stampeding lesser inklings ...  
you ... convinced of their value ...  
of the value of the *gems* hidden  
in the wordplay  
the run-on sentences  
the incomplete sentences  
the closed mouths of intermediaries  
enough to bankroll another journey  
into the past life of ...  
the past lives of ...  
awaiting the end run ... that awaits ...  
the scrimmage  
the scrum ...  
as if raising a pole barn against time  
during off-seasons  
with beards-a-plenty is enough ...  
is more than enough ...  
to satisfy the insatiabls at the back door ...  
*I am who I am* ...

*You are who you are . . .*  
*We are who we are . . .*  
introducing the next player  
the next contestant  
the next confidant  
dolloed . . . with head akinbo . . .  
the uppercut beginning its ascent . . .  
the paradigm shifting . . .  
Zoom lens atop drone . . .  
Standing down  
scripted for the takedown . . . yellowing . . .  
The elders . . . next . . . searching out  
tender limbs on which to place  
their hard-earned words . . . so yesterday . . .  
Mentioning the unmentionable was a mistake, yes? . . .  
A Type II error . . . when players  
with see-through credit lines  
are admitted - or, committed - with F-scale  
aficionados . . . and guaranteed a place  
in the penultimate playoffs . . .  
Again, you regress to costuming the unintended . . .  
highlighting misdirection  
with the fourth-quarter ticking down  
as if YouTubers in roundabouts spun your non de plume  
with an elementary logic . . .  
Calling the shots in the kaleidoscopic manner  
of the mentally ill . . .  
Star-struck triglyceriders on the storm . . .  
Go-betweens doing bright-white lines with sans serif  
junkies in triplicate . . .  
It's not anonymous, anymore, I mean . . . all pitter-patters,  
if you will? . . .  
The evidentiary moment fuels your ah-ha . . .  
the excitement filling in the blanks with the names of  
identity thieves while sweet-talking desserters . . .  
Your words . . . bittersweet . . . seduce the far-fetched . . .

A pared-down Proustian approach  
scans images . . . free-writes shortcuts  
to the enigmas of entrapment . . .  
of standing-room intimacies . . .  
No need to spend time call-waiting . . .  
The costumes will color in their own lexicon . . .  
As if partnering in the process of distributing paint  
on an uncomprehending surface . . .  
the insinuation was an *of course* phenomenon  
the enormity of which was enough to zero-out the counters  
maintained by slow readers courting time slow reading  
worrying the artless passages . . .  
You maintained a page count  
and tweaked the lines that peeked through  
the deconstruction  
misdirecting the watchers at the gate . . .  
Later you greeted the inexperienced  
with a template for testing the waters without  
smartphones . . .  
You wished otherwise . . . perhaps . . .  
and this of course was not the first-time . . .  
triggering points locked in formaldehyde  
for artless dodgers vying for a piece of your pie . . .  
You engage a theory of aesthetics . . .  
become a blank space  
in costume . . . under various guises . . .  
narrate fragments of invisible houses for shadows  
in moments of silence . . . immerse yourself  
in the ice-cold stream of a character . . .  
the ice-cold theatricality of days . . . breathing life  
and nuance into words  
with enough awareness to evolve the character  
through subtle ongoing performances  
that could be hawked as how-tos  
for a life worth living . . .  
YouTube is always handy, yes? . . .

Either way, you could use something in the distance . . .  
something to dream perfect numbers as such . . .  
Catastrophe Theory as public code . . .  
as public code breaker . . .  
splattering negative numbers all over  
trending paradoxes . . .  
You practice a type of echolocation . . . labeling  
the wherewithal of former selves linked  
to former players . . .  
their bodies semantic templates . . .  
Demarcation aside  
the tags echo stories in foreign tongues  
with words to pique the interest of eavesdroppers . . .  
Meaning becomes metaphor  
as the queue populates . . .  
tracing and retracing lines of engagement  
which from a distance resemble the structures  
in which you have spent your captioned life . . .  
Once upon a time on a sidewalk, yes? . . .  
he/she pointing out something to understudies  
who practice to perfection between takes  
with the chainlink buffering . . .  
Another time between the lines . . .  
with the same MO . . .  
The waiter returns with a takeaway box . . .  
The scene shifts to reel-to-real . . .  
The moment skips past thinking snow . . .  
You are called out for howling at the entrées . . .  
sheltered behind the runner-up's ear . . .  
This too will be memorialized . . . Imagine that! . . .  
The bed is a no-no . . . as if in the first stanza . . .  
he/she could hear the silence before  
you broke it off for independent study . . .  
The *semi-autobiographical* appeals to you  
despite its labyrinthine loopholes . . . acne scars . . .  
and OCD underpins . . .

not unlike midnight snacking on reviews  
on Rotten Tomatoes:  
funny? . . . moving? . . . profound? . . .  
plagiarized . . . and labeled a reformed other . . .  
what with the painting hanging in  
who knows whose apartment? . . .  
Fanfare for the tone deaf, yes? . . .  
A tour bus walks into a bar . . .  
the order of finish . . .  
*Irrelevant, your Honor*, Perry Mason said . . .  
a faint skirmish . . . as when spent  
he spent the rest of the evening  
chatting up his etchings . . .  
The straight dope . . . and all  
whose predilection for protein  
makes voyeurs gag . . . in reel-time  
with anonymous ratings - still coming in I should add -  
topping the list of vinyl . . .  
turntablists scratching out  
their untoward albeit melodious propositions . . .  
You improved in black and white . . .  
You're choreographing steps in the snow  
despite a front heading your way . . .  
to be followed by another  
on your heel toe toe heel . . . looking for the definition  
of *recalcitrant* . . .  
Pinterest pics color moments  
of the biomechanical  
outlined by Henry Gray in his 1858 *Anatomy* . . .  
We each . . . reach . . . at some point  
sketching caricatures with the straws we've drawn  
pastels at sunset soundtracked by a tap routine  
peddling elixirs while cheering barnraisings  
for startups . . .  
The steps will eventually come . . . indeed . . .  
scaffolded by drop-dead paradiddles . . .

Messages from elsewhere  
seem to have guided you thus far ...  
Again you pantomime escape ... sparklers crackling ...  
wading through shallows as if clarity  
was chomping at the bit ... to enter the frame ...  
the blameless obfuscation  
of your notebook jottings pinning the tail ...  
How to explain the fascination ...  
the tacit approval of your blue books  
brinned with proofs of migratory  
thoughts crowding out others  
in the takeaway box of your imagination ...  
clocks desperate as once ... oh so long ago ...  
You are plain-spoken whenever you enter the ring ...  
eyes focused on the prize-of-the-moment ...  
filling some gap  
you don't remember from where despite  
which you continue to go through the motions  
matching the self ... in the mirror  
when with the sun you sign into your life-is-OK life ...  
You as mirror-image examine the usefulness/uselessness  
of strung words ... of words qua words ...  
words riding shotgun with ambivalence ... the hours  
spent with muted palette keynoting a declaration of  
independence ... a declaration of co-independence ...  
co-dependence ...  
Your articles of confederation ... of clothing  
as Exhibit A ...  
await sleep's hum ... which may never come ...  
Your costumes of engagement rarely  
uninteresting ... especially now ...  
cutting along the dotted lines for the new you ...  
looking at the looks ...  
dull pencils dry brushes ... sketching  
nothing to memorialize the past ...  
your past as retreat into decaffeination shelved ...

The queue gluts with auctioneers of language . . .  
of stage directions with backstories of childlike mischief  
high-topped and burqa'd against the wind  
not unlike the polyglot introducing your next odyssey  
in the language of your dreams . . .  
the language of your past self . . .  
You have tried to flee recognition . . .  
but there's always someone . . . somewhere . . .  
with a memory of your bedroom's glass menagerie . . .  
untouched . . . memorializing the tongues of insinulators  
who GPS your movements for YouTubers poet-lookalikes  
and reenactors  
about to embark on a journey  
into the heart of some darkness . . .  
It's all SRO . . . for a while at least, yes? . . . at least  
until strangers begin sexting strange images . . .  
The day unfolds flat with allegations prompting you  
to engage Death in a game of numbly-peg,  
channeling Scrooge with the tiresome  
*But does it have to be?* . . .  
The barleycorned life and times of, yes? . . .  
Will the plug be pulled? . . .  
Will it morph into an Oscar Week? . . . an Oscar Wilde? . . .  
Will your knight advance to the podium  
your head choked with streaming videos  
of the good old days . . .  
some of which were indeed good enough  
to fetch an Oscar . . . had they been nominated? . . .  
You ride the crest of here/not-here . . . filling the  
concave mirror in the Fun House with mothballed dress-  
down-Friday costumes and brittle unkept promises . . .  
your entourage feeding your rock-and-roll role . . .  
But the center - as expected? - doesn't hold and  
*I don't give a damn* is a wet towel  
tossed into the ring at the end of the ninth  
when amid the full catastrophe you are ticketed for



rambling ... for drifting off-point at the barre ...  
with a bullseye henna'd onto your unlined forehead ...  
To lose yourself in the pages of a softcover ...  
the pages of a graphic novel ...  
to lose yourself in the action of a graphic novel ...  
in the one two three of a graphic novel ...  
between the stacks ... in the sanctuary  
of a bookstore ...  
the sanctuary of books ... of words ...  
someone somewhere is talking to you ...  
trying to insinuate himself/herself into your life ...  
into the graphic novel of your life ...  
into the who what when where why of your life ...  
Again ... the same voice ...  
but different from the black and white ...  
You try to follow its dotted line ...  
along the canal ...  
leading out of here ... wherever *here* is ...  
leading to unmapped areas ... imaginary areas ...  
A patron ... patron saint? ... talks revitalization ...  
somewhere ... here? ... where points  
are made by those easily led  
into the dawn of a new day ... another day ...  
beginning mid-chapter  
with sun ... then sleet ... then snow ...  
The playbook turns on its heel spurring motion-  
sickness for those taxiing ... you among them ...  
And now you're gung-ho about the suffix *esque* ...  
immersing yourself ... in the other ...  
the pieces coming together effortlessly ...  
bumping you up to the next level of engagement ...  
soundtracked by the brain's 40 Hz hum ...  
That the criteria remain unmet is irrelevant ...  
That the costumes are ill-fitting ... incidental ...  
The slippery slope slipperier  
as you misplace your self ...

You cardio in a sea of idiolects . . .  
diagramming interior monologues . . .  
The right stuff is within reach  
of the polyvocality of recyclers  
taking recyclables to a redemption center . . .  
Suffice it to say what? . . .  
A dead zone exchanges inanimates feeding quarters to  
blown-glass avatars  
while questioning the preparation instructions  
jotted down in haste . . .  
Your pockets bulge confusion . . .  
and continue as secular entities . . .  
A go-between oozing cheap cologne  
you rarely go into the yard where the sundial  
every once in a while does time . . .  
Of course, this all is from Stage 1 players  
who snoke the endgame with lush abandon  
*tsking* you for dealing a bag of KFC extra hot wings  
at the head shop . . .  
The aluminum block from the melted-down cans of your  
childhood triggers something . . . perhaps the shortest  
straw exiled just out of sight . . .  
Writing ad copy for bedside pilgrims catapults you  
into an altered state filled with past players . . .  
while token rituals garner support from special interest  
groups currying embellishments . . .  
There will be no extra credit  
for your appreciation of footnotes or anything  
encapsulating your past escapades . . . You like most have  
apparently forgotten the mandatory reshoot of your life  
in which icemen are jettisoned the one too many mornings  
after before footage is returned to the underperforming  
film crew with postage hampered by magical thinking . . .  
Taking center stage with five minutes left in the quarter  
this ankle boot with socks thing bodes well for  
idiosynchronicity . . .

When was the last time you asked yourself? ...  
Your stint as resident insomniac  
coughing up night terrors  
silent screen stars speeding into the valley  
thick with cloudcover ...  
Interior monologues terrifying the what-ifs  
cowering in the corner of your bedroom  
where nightly tête-à-têtes  
announce imaginary numbers  
to the worrisome packaged in plastic ...  
Better late than never, yes? ...  
Buckling up ...  
the backward logic of go-betweens  
infinitesimal touch-ups  
the ifs ands buts of moments  
otherwise known as forever ...  
Do nothing ... the tune earworms ...  
sidewalk cracks point the way ...  
You will be badged - and badgered - in due course ...  
nothing else if not ...  
I can't help but think about the resurgence ...  
Yes, there will be more ...  
Sentences parsed on off days when somnambulists gather  
dust in makeshift libraries where amanuenses per diem'd  
mine the gasps of ghosts ...  
The Hall of Incidentals opens for business as usual ...  
shards of glass dropped in a labyrinth  
wait to enter your words ...  
an amalgam of riffs on emptiness held back  
in the early grades ...  
There was a window ...  
is a window ...  
will be a window ...  
I am working in the garden with voices lining up  
for handouts of iridescent themes ...  
I know you know the opening lines to the nights

that curl around you to caress you as scripted ...  
This much of course ... But so? ...  
Feelings of linearity ... traced back to elementary school  
and your fear of fat ... and looking at strangers ...  
but not really ...  
bowing to your mother's warning  
that it's dangerous to meet their eyes ...  
The woman on the subway smelled of food  
and wore a brooch that you are sure had a story to tell  
but no one was listening ...  
perhaps a long ago interlude of intimacy ...  
Your palms sweated onto the cover of the book  
you riffled through in the bookstore but decided not to  
buy ... and now soaking away the day in your tub  
with the Kindle'd edition  
you're filled with remorse for not supporting  
neighborhood moms and pops' ...  
The minuscule battles which daily weigh heavily ...  
despite the profusion of irony on the logos of t-shirts  
on passersby in flood pants ...  
Soon there will be something somewhere  
behooving you to engage ... until eventually those too  
will quietly fall off ... and you will be left second-  
guessing your moves  
as you play chess against a glass of Cabernet ...  
Irrespective of what ... you ask? ...  
Irrespective of nothing ...  
autopiloting across the paint-by-number peoplescapes  
the great ship's casualness ...  
curbside ... stalled in the last quarter ...  
unbeknownst to all ... and you ... again ...  
following up as requested ...  
But requested by whom? ...  
Do you know? ... Do you care? ...  
Suddenly everything recedes ...  
chapter headings blur ...

the entrance full of afternoons . . .  
you meet the conundrum head on for lunch  
underwritten by unknowns  
who wait for emojis to translate the moments  
which fade with every serving . . .  
There will be a sharp turn in no time . . .  
You're ready for this, yes? . . .  
As imperfect a day for banana fish, yes? . . .  
the editor changing *fine* to *perfect* . . .  
the tale suddenly engorged with character development  
on the ledge outside the window  
loaded with pop-ups dealing fireworks . . .  
You enter into an agreement -  
an agreement with the other person in the room  
he/she conflicted . . .  
Costumes . . . a crapshoot bought and sold . . .  
Does the name of the *game* mean anything? . . .  
The cruelest month comes and goes and returns  
as a revenant . . . with thirty pieces of silver  
and a free app for tears of joy and madness . . .  
You are recruited for a walk-on  
in a soon-to-be-released romcom  
bubbling innuendo . . .  
Gutsy and captivating, your nanosecond demonstrates  
an edginess that merits a double-wide audience . . .  
The rain sends you into *Brief Lives of the Brontes*  
before you touch down . . . without flourish  
as if the three sisters  
stepped out of dissonant voices . . .  
filigreed, of course . . .  
homespun . . . without the bullpen of images  
by naive writers from the one-way streets of hometown . . .  
Stay the course? . . .  
You squeeze into a club . . . with your sister . . .  
eyes pocketing change . . .  
short stories all . . . as if . . . little matter . . .

With the right mix . . . and nothing unexpected . . .  
A minor key to a door etched with algorithmic code  
especially now . . . the DJ . . . pumped with smokes from  
little-known addresses . . .  
A welcome interruption . . .  
and more . . . just beyond the breakers . . .  
A friend-of-a-friend-of-a-friend, yes? . . .  
*Objection, your Honor* . . . the question spun around . . .  
reintroduced . . .  
There are 50 people . . . and then some . . .  
Suddenly, the dialogue (or diatribe) turns weird . . .  
you exit with the cast  
from *West Side Story* at Glimmerglass . . .  
A parking lot in Garfield . . .  
rethinking the Chinese menu . . .  
the horticultural exactitude of the passing years . . .  
amanuenses at your beck-and-call . . .  
You are here . . . he knew . . . and you knew he knew . . .  
the return trip in the back seat of a Rolls . . .  
*(Is this on? Please ignore the last line. It's a typo.)*  
*Immersion-A-Plenty* . . . and you're down a freebie . . .  
And now the esotericism of tandem surfing . . .  
grounds you . . . isolates you . . .  
and you're all about bragging rights . . . nit-picking  
with a falsetto's exactitude . . . overwhelming the  
unsuspecting . . .  
You're good with that . . . and other things too . . .  
dissecting the lives of players who odyssey'd your  
perspective . . .  
post-coital images seeping through the day's fringe . . .  
infinite . . . in their looping . . .  
The octagonal sign . . . full-term . . .  
to fill the spaces left blank by unidentified mannequins  
who of late have insinuated themselves into your hand-  
wringing . . . the substance of which matters not . . .  
If only you had stopped off at the corner butcher's . . .

Listen . . . time and again . . .  
Why bother rearranging the décor when,  
from the horizontal, every move you make will sting? . . .  
What was his given name, anyway? . . .  
Your dresser awaits . . .  
Act One Scene One: The Fall of South Troy . . .  
Floral patterns will go well with the Pinot Noir . . .  
*easy on the palate with fresh cherry and strawberry and  
super-subtle tannin . . .*  
*Even your white-wine-only guests will find a friend . . .*  
A dismantling of the exhausted light is one way . . .  
Again, the opening line? . . .  
Parlaying the quintessential location . . . location . . .  
location . . . with an heirloomed rant . . .  
Noteworthy . . . you managed to conglomerate on cue . . .  
and returned ever-so-briefly and ever-so-quietly to the  
streets of your middle period . . .  
You became expert at profiling purple . . .  
replaying the cinematic collage driving the bus . . .  
simply to taunt . . .  
The normative signs of disaster  
that constitute everyday life . . . humiliated . . .  
adored . . . continued . . .  
The soon-to-be-announced clog the airspace and, despite  
fluidity, make-do with the accoutrements on tap . . .  
A Bud Light . . . then a doublewide . . .  
equating the lack of erudition with a sad impulse  
begging someone to speak volumes . . .  
to deconstruct past players populating  
imaginary dioramas with wannabes from Golden Books . . .  
Vegetation's understory forecasts acid rain  
while offshore an Orca grieves her calf . . .  
Will you please google the answers  
before the endgame? . . .  
How many minutes on the clock? . . .  
He/she will be retired to a type of Walmart . . .

in the high peaks ...  
Impartial, if you will ...  
Your mentoring festers in a circular file ...  
let go when downsizing seemed inevitable ...  
this too Twittered ...  
Squiggles from a long-ago Saturday morning kids' show  
are downstreamed by a female bareback rider  
trying to recreate the exchanges  
that shaped the present moment ...  
postcards from the entrance to a sideshow do their part  
but translation's loopholes trap the emptiness  
which despite your apps hold fast ...  
Something about impermeability ... and the years  
spent woodshedding with a clown ...  
honing one's craft ... and all that  
as if *that* was the silver bullet missing  
or left out of the instructions for dancing ...  
How release carries you across the moat of time ...  
The odyssey's pull ... its impulsivity ...  
Everything coming together ... then not ...  
You were here ... languishing in the inevitable ...  
Grease monkeys flood the yellow bricks  
with Shakespeare:  
*... a world too wide / For his shrunk shank, ...*  
You measure for measure their costumes ... and fail ...  
fall? ... they ... yours ... a cache of pics ...  
and then ... you as speedbump ...  
as pickup ...  
and a close encounter of the unkind  
in the sleeper cab of a big rig ... Again,  
the cupboard as bare as the moat ...  
the drawbridge ... drawn ...  
expecting to feature ... Forsooth! ...  
Texts seek deep house ... earwormed, yes? ...  
You begin profiling players' carbon footprints ...  
following them into the rehearsal space ...



You are a central intelligence agency  
in a right-to-farm zone  
with incidentals from soon-to-be-released boxed sets  
showcasing this week's top 20 hurdy-gurdiers ...  
Form follows function ... out the door ...  
There are no puppies in your REM sleep ...  
the dream sequence having been abruptly perchanced ...  
Bedheads ... with Roy Orbison in dreams ...  
sidestep the Procrustean parlance of machines  
in the first act ...  
You worry entropic penalty ...  
and Bezos's two-pizza rule ...  
as if a common denominator had been odyssey'd  
on call ...  
*Mana said there'll be days like this ...*  
when drones pick up ...  
and it's first and ten ... and your little black book  
seeps professional foosballers ...  
This sudden interest in flophouses, yes?  
and rehab centers overridden with ants ... and uncles  
of a different color ... a different flavor ...  
Someone somewhere is being set up for a photo shoot ...  
You may be called in for captioning ...  
There was an inconspicuousness to it ...  
I mean ... there we were ... cresting conversations  
as the clock boarded the third quarter  
with little to deconstruct ...  
Of course, he/she brought it up ...  
drilled it home, in fact ... but without exclamation ...  
and so ... it wobbled ... frayed ...  
leaving us free to disassociate ...  
to wallow in post-time remorse ...  
Someone suggested hacking the portal ...  
but that snacked of illiteracy,  
if you know what I mean ...  
You see, you said, and without tweaking ... we did ...

You escape . . . into the detritus  
of the penultimate chapter  
This of course before the covers morphed into queasy  
YouTube videos . . .  
DJs? . . . How many did you . . . do you know . . . what? . . .  
You recall the encumbrances of the self you were  
encaustic images in Crayola colors . . . the docent  
stumbling over his/her linguistic recklessness . . .  
The trip around the block . . . and then some . . .  
summer fall winter spring  
numbering the players *en passant*  
as if in a move to check . . .  
But what of Emily's nights at a child's school desk  
in her white-curtained high-ceilinged second-floor  
corner bedroom? . . .  
It was a very good year, indeed! . . .  
On the tour bus to Amherst  
the bus driver straight out of *High Noon* . . .  
the discoloration of the rain . . . little matter now  
at the wake of the bassist's wife  
while the shame-sham-smear-he-said-she-said rages . . .  
The butler with the candelabra in the library  
stood up by Miss Havisham . . . did it . . .  
*Because I could not stop for death -*  
*He kindly stopped for me?* . . .  
You practiced the score . . . mastered the technique of  
throat-singing . . . your tongue forking . . .  
a dish of eye-candy . . .  
suddenly aware of parameters . . .  
neted out by someone called something else . . .  
happy pretending you had other names . . .  
You worry the right shoes . . .  
the red shoes . . .  
the shoes born to dance . . .  
to dance alone . . .  
to dance with someone . . .

someone who knows the steps ...  
someone familiar with the inner Martian ... aging ...  
friendly ... directing traffic ... your traffic ...  
as if an invitation to the dance on Mars ...  
This was enough ... *is* enough ...  
at least for now ...  
at least for the watchers at the gate ...  
Now you're telling me you're onto something ...  
like a poem awaiting binary coding ... lines loaded  
with flaws and failings ...  
wannabes trading calques ...  
Who needs it, anyway? ... *Did I just say that?* ...  
You're not going to play the memory card, are you? ...  
while ramifications claw their way into the morning's  
coffee klatch silencing closed captioners? ...  
You'll have time after the interrogation, yes? ...  
Why not try on an idiom? ... Many do, you know ...  
Fit and finish is always a big deal ... for some ...  
There seems to be an absence of pretense  
shadowing the lazy romantic cliché  
in your pocketful of melodramas ...  
Trading eights ... as autofiction ...  
as one moment to the next ...  
transforming attendees into rubbernecks  
misdirected by the odyssey's sleight of hand ...  
A duffel bag's nomenclature ... fortuitous ...  
Trying to see beyond the outlandish ...  
susceptible to the dropbox's tweaking ...  
Why insist on presenting it out of turn ...  
flagging inconsistencies? ...  
*Here's your part!* ... à la Miles ...  
The exhibit choked with expectations ...  
You're dribbling memories into a journal ...  
pouting a return ... a regression ...  
the scripted line of best fit ...  
opening a door ... players jumping out of the scatterplot

of your short story . . . spinning . . .  
with the elusiveness of clarity . . . of renouncement . . .  
but what are you renouncing? . . . this time? . . .  
Soon the wintry dawn will collide with shells  
ejected from a chamber . . .  
The season begins . . .  
as if in a flash a tree is taken down by a chainsaw . . .  
by the lines in the chainsaw's script . . .  
the mandatory eight . . .  
All scripted in the moment . . . a return . . .  
a regression . . .  
The violence of the moment . . . and yet . . .  
the sensation odd . . . straddling pleasure and pain . . .  
a barometer . . . for future hookups . . .  
The instability of hiding behind a mask . . .  
of ordering off-menu . . .  
uncarded . . . without reservation . . .  
the dryness of the imagination . . . and manipulation . . .  
with you becoming fixated on a dumbwaiter  
as survival tactic  
with its ups and downs  
passed around . . . and over . . .  
to escape through a chink in the keynoter's address . . .  
Engaging the odyssey . . . photoshopped . . .  
as you perform the obligatory . . .  
much to their ecstasy . . .  
the mastery of misdirection . . . of drama . . .  
Getting paid to get laid, yes? . . .  
Costumed as the other . . .  
running the wheel of red and black . . .  
blue directing alma maters  
of all shapes and sizes . . .  
Headlights underestimating triumph . . .  
*I am . . . like you . . .*  
Collecting empties on off-days to kick-start returns . . .  
You disappear into the pages of a book . . .

tallying the mispronunciations  
of book-learning tempered by experience . . .  
The transition compulsory . . . now that you have cleared  
that hurdle . . . and are hell-bent  
on driving through the foam barricade . . .  
Go-betweens will surely offer solace  
as if to say the endgame has petered out . . .  
You have arrived at two desires . . .  
It's where you want to be, yes? . . .  
A big rig sinners with hospitality at the next Motel 6 . . .  
You talk about pulling what 12-steppers call a *geographic*  
hooking up with an acquaintance from your fire escape  
days when rooftops filled with cigarette smoke  
and not reading books to children was an outrage . . .  
You can't imagine the shapes they come in . . .  
So-called vestigial organs playing Bach  
as if it were your new favorite painting . . .  
a monochromatic attempt . . . hung eye-level  
with the sound of someone vacuuming  
under a daybed . . . earmarked for the tone-deaf . . .  
Young and fresh . . . the composition extraordinary . . .  
paired with short stories he/she could not repeat . . .  
That was back when we took black-and-white photographs  
of each other with a Polaroid One-Step . . .  
The detritus of the curb has become a come-on to violists  
who are suckered in by the harmonics of international  
concert pitch . . .  
Most have zero in common . . . despite trivializing  
the sad and disappointing waistbands  
of front runners . . .  
But the dream escapes before you awaken . . .  
Somehow . . . somewhere . . . a blacksmith's syncopated beat  
followed by a clothesline's hum . . .  
It takes a neighborhood, yes? . . .  
*I am into fixtures*, you insist . . .  
as clouds clutter the sky

and your bag of groceries gives way  
to a maze of brochures hawking timeshares . . .  
The sun is late . . . You have forgotten  
the words . . . the way . . . the gallon of milk . . .  
Uberizing your wishes just won't do . . .  
Did you actually think you could call it in? . . .  
This morning's tap dance was outrageously complex . . .  
It's the complexity of the other  
floating a hazard . . . the light changing . . .  
Monopoly's admonition not to pass GO! . . .  
Hundreds were pressed into service . . .  
before your shoutout . . .  
And now look at the crowdfunders buying in . . .  
as if . . . as if . . . as if . . .  
your lip-syncing will make a dent  
in the nosebleed section . . .  
Thanks you . . . in advance . . .  
We look forward to your revision  
despite the seeming unrevisability of this stream of  
consciousness swinning off the page . . .  
Around and around a roundabout . . .  
tough as 10 penny nails  
sporting cerise kicks for your podcast on bipedalism  
with an exclusion clause from the Holy Roman Empire . . .  
The instability of *The Life and Times of . . . TBA*  
ushers you into the finals . . .  
blue books blackened with Ticonderoga #2s . . .  
Two people lying on a bed of 10 penny nails  
walk into a bar . . .  
Rehearsals and reversals, yes? . . .  
Penobscot Bay remains a mystery to the marine life  
waiting for Ivy-Leaguers to take the bait  
as the world is whited-out . . .  
its palpability . . . a big floppy couch  
stuffed with ping-pongers . . . exposed mid-serve . . .  
abusing over-the-counter union cream

while awaiting a shuttle to detox . . .  
This and other addenda clog . . .  
Odysseyites write you up and down . . .  
over and under . . .  
You yourself know this . . . as well . . .  
iPhone voicemails take you back to Stage IV intimacies  
but now you can't remember . . .  
and you're being stalked  
by a string of declarative sentences  
whose hoodies have unhinged the imperative . . .  
It's no longer enough to ignore this  
or the commodification of life extension  
in the dairy section of Warhol's 10,000+ 35mm pics . . .  
Many make waiting a career . . .  
You saw this yourself in your last trip  
down breakdown lane . . .  
The '50's series *Omnibus* was telecast live  
for crackers in *Chelsea Girls*  
with the Joker's *here we go* and Frost's *you come too* . . .  
*Anatomical World's* skulls and skeletons  
have decided to go (window shopping)  
with fish and chips . . .  
The rigidity of footnotes stalemates you  
on odd numbered days  
during months that begin with a vowel  
when 0.7mm leads prove to be too soft  
for jotting memoirs of backpedaling . . .  
The inconsistencies overwhelm . . . and increase  
at an alarming rate . . .  
Just in time for the holidays, yes? . . .  
With worries of internet penetration  
at all time highs . . .  
Lady Day's *I can't get started* forecasts a cold front  
accompanying a highly detailed index  
with entries that - according to *The New Yorker's*  
Dan Chaisson - *cover everything from hiking to*

*honeymooning to beekeeping and braiding,*  
*allowing readers to track Sylvia Plath's imagination*  
*as her poems evolved . . .*  
*in a voice . . . true to [her] own weirdnesses . . .*  
Your reminiscences take me back  
to an old roster of players -  
color-coded . . . and sized . . . for maximum effect . . .  
The method is so young it totters . . .  
But you've heard it all from attachés  
who roll with the credits . . .  
The list bloats . . .  
and your piercings have a curfew . . .  
Once upon a yellow romper . . .  
around 30 . . . give or take . . .  
The script reads several *oral* exchanges  
a phrase linked to homespun . . .  
as in *the winter of our fall* . . .  
But who directed the run-through? . . .  
and who were the sequentials . . .  
or the catch-as-catch-cans? . . .  
Your iPhone vibrates with coconut balm  
wondering about the *older, regular*  
whose gift was gab . . .  
The stop-action . . . disabled . . .  
or, rather, who stop-actioned the disabled? . . .  
*Looking for Mr. Goodbar* elevates to happenstance . . .  
I'll see your goodbar and raise you twenty . . . with  
Diane Keaton . . . or Telly *Who loves ya, baby?* Savalas . . .  
or any of a number of extras . . .  
then downhill . . . through the thick growth  
at brain drain . . .  
But will you see it coming? . . .  
You are involuntarily committed . . . to something . . .  
to nothing . . .  
to see it through . . . your history of walking  
the nooks and crannies of flâneurs smirking through



costume changes . . . and letters of the alphabet  
with everyone croaking . . . everyone trying to get  
soberer . . . and soberer . . .  
The lowest common drama will do, yes? . . .  
It's all kindling, I suppose . . .  
Like the caboose in that strange fairy tale  
of Bach's motif . . .  
tuning slides maxed . . . daytripping across shallows . . .  
maneuvering roll calls  
to bring out the best in Netflix . . .  
You assume arpeggiation . . . swoon dyslexics with Bayesian  
reversals . . . spiked with the odds you've been messing  
with on the off ramp . . .  
when the probability of words mutated . . .  
circumambulating . . . and elementary my dear Watson  
knowing that castling is the only move  
involving two pieces . . .  
Meanwhile the unruffledness of days  
splattered with snow . . .  
A trio of clowns . . . random in tandem . . .  
fresh from a nightmare . . . hand out free passes . . .  
to open mics . . . now closed . . .  
A time for revision . . . and repetition . . . looms . . .  
The unwelcomed clone of your selfie is on hold . . .  
choking back backstories of incidentals  
to bring off-color to passersby  
exiting kiosks on the unnamed streets  
of someone's hometown . . .  
You search for links to direct you  
thorough the avalanche  
of late-night palm readings  
by recent converts to mine . . .  
Pasta will be passed around without remorse . . .  
without malice aforethought . . .  
with trial balloons launched without beta testing . . .  
*It's OK to be remaindered, he/she said, now that the*

*everyday is signed sealed and delivered without  
return receipt requested . . .*  
It seems foolish to think about ins and outs . . .  
the cantomine trying to show how opacity descends upon  
us . . . and we skip the freebies . . .  
the duplicitous star-struck lovers  
their lapse among leap-froggers . . .  
fascination shortlisted . . .  
You have set your sights on leaving everything out . . .  
regretting the insertion . . . again? . . .  
the rearrangement some would call *louche* . . .  
You worry fastidiousness will undo you  
especially now with your backpack gaping . . .  
utensils giggling their inexactitude . . .  
imposing drama on the rescheduled reshoot  
awaiting revisions . . .  
So many continue to be damaged with the dawn . . .  
the world as Hawking predicted  
becoming uninhabitable . . .  
while uncharitables plot the canvas and push paint to  
escape the tired conventions dull patter sour confessions  
moved by boredom from the fringe  
to critical spotlight . . .  
words reigniting mental gymnastics  
meriting a trip to the mall  
handicapping cluster flies snowboarding dry powder . . .  
After which variations on themes . . . enter the frame  
goop fogging the brain . . .  
neural networks and all that . . .  
irrespective of how much you practiced impossibilities  
which took time away from being held upside down until  
you got your balance . . .  
Mosaic faces urge you to monochrome your life  
to recommit to sobriety . . . hedge your bets  
while odysseyites board short stories  
with subtitled cigarettes

inviting you to re-up ...  
Miscounts abound ...  
Most if not all seek this, yes? ...  
Yet somehow, somewhere, there are average nuclear  
families living in average nuclear waste dumps  
trumped-up with average nuclear happiness ...  
Blond best friends are trying to make a go of it ...  
convinced they are destined to meet  
the most famous person alive ...  
Waiting for ... then waiting again ...  
Recruiting sandmen for graphical interfaces  
with sans serifs  
brought back as uncommoners ...  
Imagine the confusion ... the scale sliding  
all over the slippery slope of mastery  
operationalized as blips in a sea of screens ...  
monochromatic life savers  
wrapped in tinfoil ...  
The scene opens with paint-by-number distractions ...  
Odysseyites clamor steamer trunks  
when last calls led to back rooms where  
opportunists drifted in and out of snowcastles  
pocketing nonchalance for iPhone moments  
saved to the cloud ...  
gaming tables alive with soup(er) bowls  
for aficionados awaiting pat-downs ...  
the halftime show drawn and quartered  
amid controversy ...  
An ultrasound tech ... presents with ponegranates  
small talks the front page  
leaning in ... as if quarterbacking ...  
Moments bespeak moments ...  
The reconfiguration of camera angles ...  
speechless at an open mic ...  
the ride home a hacked password ...  
Why now the interruption? ...

Friends of friends arrive with leeks  
count the take of the toll . . .  
A scuffle in the meat department is captured  
on 36 iPhones . . .  
Bigger . . . and BIGGER protein . . .  
Is a life lived in faux fur a life lived? . . .  
Another interruption . . .  
You retreat to a labyrinth of overheard words . . .  
grammatically indifferent words . . .  
words in yellow vests . . . SANCTUARY . . .  
Your impatience with the inanimate  
grows with the stick-built . . .  
the accountability of staking seedless tomatoes  
as artifacts for the impossible . . .  
Are the wine legs as they should be? . . .  
You know the drill . . . when will you decide? . . .  
Self-starters are bused to a starting line . . .  
confused by lifestyle changes  
and made to consider a cache of meds  
with no guarantee . . .  
The comedy of monotony informs your late nights . . .  
There was a time . . . not that long ago . . .  
Take this down . . . breathe in . . . hold . . .  
breathe out . . . Here's another . . . breathe in . . .  
Calling your lost dog . . . who isn't lost  
as if you need to tell someone  
that something strange is about to happen . . .  
a stylishly ill-advised moment  
walking through the neighborhood  
calling your lost dog . . . who isn't lost . . .  
The incompleteness hits you on the ride home  
and you fashion descenders  
where mistakes have real consequences . . .  
400 forgeries is nothing to poo-poo . . .  
Simplification made simple, yes? . . .  
as in the final scene where

the morning's cereal box speaks  
to Scorsese's rat crawling out the door . . .  
This day like a few others lately feels rigged . . .  
and grocery shopping won't be enough  
to fend off the players - extras? - queuing up  
at the entrance to your exit . . .  
The jigsaw puzzle of attraction  
with pieces scattered throughout your dreamscape  
prompts you to play the mask  
with a rush as diagrammed . . . at eye level . . .  
Armchair vacancies rant the airspace . . .  
retire their uniform in the middle of the game  
and leave . . . to dissolve . . .  
in the current . . .  
The facsimile life . . . the well-oiled facsimile life . . .  
aborts the highway . . .  
curtailing alternatives with bipolarity  
for archivists on coffee break . . .  
How did you know the dancer  
was about to attempt a villanelle? . . .  
Bystanders capture moments . . .  
before and after . . . after and before . . .  
and again . . . but remain glued to the well-trodden . . .  
And you? . . .  
The late-winter cookout in the backyard  
with everything growing silent  
riding the elevator into the snow-filled basement  
categorizing Kondo's declutter:  
clothes, books, papers, *komono*, mementos  
sparking photographic memories  
of late-night talk shows  
the predation . . . and willingness  
to report that it was a joke . . . it was plastic . . .  
keep your hands raised . . .  
It becomes second-nature . . .  
icing on the endgame . . .

the snow without surcease  
as you sweep flakes into the palm of your left hand  
a shopping cart out of control in a parking lot ...  
You are sprung to joy on the treadmill at the gym  
while on the wall TVs  
feature muted images of raised hands ...  
The color-coding continues despite warnings  
that elevated bowls may cause bloat ...  
You tend to take things in stride ...  
But then you find that the sensation diminishes  
with repetition ... Proust's disappointment  
with his second and third swallow of tea ...  
the banality of it all ... a constant ...  
Memorializing the parties of the unlined and bushy  
slipping tongues nonchalantly  
as if the clock had indeed been stopped ...  
No need to calculate the obliqueness now ...  
wait for the commercial break  
when you can stretch and raid the fridge  
and adjust the cushions  
out of earshot of the insinulators in the walls ...  
An unstrung marionette finds words  
in the redacted script ... the basement trashed  
by cleaners sent in to do the white thing ...  
Indeed ... the blurbiness of blurbs:  
*I write you ... you write me ...*  
bundling software for coders  
as the night twinkles with bug juice in trash cans  
lined with garbage bags ...  
I am become ... a lineman for the county  
splicing telephone lines ...  
as an aperitif ... an insinuation ...  
the enthrallment of the table read  
with you costumed  
for yet another audition ...  
the runner-up benched on fouls ...

This will be a night to remember  
a Titanic-ran-ning-ice-berg night to remember  
and you're buying into a stairway to heaven  
to the magical realism  
of a room filled with mirrors . . .  
gorging yourself on ample food  
at the wolf's table  
the-wolf-with-groping-paws-table  
before engaging the matrix  
of permutations . . . and combinations . . .  
the morning's ride back to the future  
as time clocks Round Three . . .  
and the gappiness of cubicles  
mimics *The Shining's* snowy maze  
while Freud and Jung  
arm wrestle for your backstory . . .  
the doubtful guest insisting she is *Anna* Freud  
at the free-throw line  
during the madness of March  
which some documentarian chortled *ain't much* . . .  
Daily we review takeaways . . .  
the guns and roses . . . and guns . . . and . . .  
the bowed heads of aftermaths  
squeezing through metal detectors  
into three-ring circuses of misdirection:  
you can't go home again! . . .  
Your wake-up call went south  
bubble gun breathalyzer  
*Did it lose its flavor on the bedpost overnight?* . . .  
back to sleep  
with news anchors of pileups on the Interstate  
following the dotted line . . . again . . . and again . . .  
picking up pieces of span  
interspersed with recipes  
and promises of misappropriations  
and guest appearances

on late-late-late-night talk shows . . .  
The House of Crazy is open for business . . .  
speeding along . . .  
with feigned nonchalance . . .  
but you knew that, yes? . . .  
as the Queen of Redaction . . . a bowl of protein . . .  
*can't get enough!* . . .  
Photo albums bloat . . .  
the way it was . . .  
the way they were . . .  
the way we were . . .  
overdrawn bank accounts and selfies . . .  
pockets stuffed with aftermaths . . .  
they were game for anteing-up  
the pot speaking a dead language . . .  
Pity there wasn't an unfinished symphony  
for the sawtooth ensemble to finish . . .  
and now your phone is dead . . .  
and you're sweating indictment for buying a burger  
to get your kid into an ivy league school  
and you're ready to accept submissions  
for your 24-hour meltdown . . .  
Subsequent tete-à-tetes to air on Netflix . . .  
Hired hands hand in school colors . . . in the nick of  
the full shortage . . . if you know what I mean . . .  
Incidentals brim the showroom . . . vet orphanhood . . .  
The newly-hatched are cumbersome, yes? . . .  
but then you like the length of autofictions  
fabricating homeland depositions . . .  
some remotely . . . with strings attached . . .  
What did you mean by that anyway? . . .  
Summer showers continue to be inducted  
into a Hall of Fame of sorts . . .  
the lawn . . . awaits the morning's drill . . .  
Aceing the final, you are relieved  
of motion sickness . . .



remembering the era when slide rules became the go-to  
for theme parks . . . every week strolling  
amid stopgappers . . . bobbysoxers  
packing incidentals on their way home . . .  
anguishing over choices made . . .  
crow's feet plummeting . . .  
You wake to a confused alphabet and into a diorama with  
a cup of coffee following those who had stepped out . . .  
and vanished . . .  
The day sunshines snowbanks into hiding . . .  
Today's lecture on the *Gerty* episode in *Ulysses*  
held most but you found it formulaic . . .  
old guys getting off at the sight of young skin . . .  
There was a moment a bit ago when you had almost  
thought it through . . . or thought you could  
think it through . . .  
but that passed with Kindle's eInk . . . backlit and all . . .  
You look at yourself . . . and at the trees  
cavorting . . . preparing to give it another go . . .  
the clockwork gearing loud and exciting . . .  
Isn't it something how we grab ourselves  
following directions into the next scene  
and GPS our location . . .  
which may or may not play out as hoped? . . .  
But so what? . . .  
*In some strange way it's all good, yes? . . .*  
Lowering yourself into the cockpit . . .  
words belted in . . .  
another boldfaced expedition with you celebrating  
the flash nonfiction of Li Po  
*in the mountains on a summer day . . .*  
You share it . . . then google the follow-up  
which comes in at just under three minutes . . .  
How to explain the pencil portrait in the corner . . .  
the resemblance to Facebook  
sketched in someone else's hand? . . .

You continue with one hundred and eleven -  
Maggie Nelson's, *The Latest Winter*, ...  
the whole thing coming back to your draft and how even  
before the bell ended Round 12 you had managed  
to skip the three chapters assigned  
for extra credit ...  
You hawked the installation with misunderstanding ...  
a French press with a migraine ... while  
your cross country junkets came on Facebook ...  
intriguing tongues ... trying to fit into the holes  
dug into the script by a misdirected director  
whose profile you later learned had been lifted  
from a table of contents ...  
Pasts spilled out ... time borrowed ...  
You began dropping clues  
with the insistence of a night out ...  
This happened, yes? ... and continues ...  
After the alphabet, abutments were tuned  
to a minor key ...  
Roundabouts tried to round you up but you loaded your  
brush with paint and insignificance ...  
You were told it had all been written down ...  
every last nuance ... every misappropriation ...  
every identity theft ... circling  
like a flock of kites ...  
The sketches you made in a ledger went undiscovered for  
over 120 years ... Undisclosed players hung out  
at a neglected ball diamond  
falling into the wrong chapter ... losing face ...  
The matinee chides your hypothesis  
bulking the theorem into oblivion ...  
Early arrivals arrive ...  
captured on security cameras ...  
he said ... she said ... they said ...  
sample bags brim with notions from ATMs ...  
fingers finger finger food ...

count doubloons . . . worry  
the quivering idiocy of disintegration . . .  
Instead of pampering the chef, perhaps? . . .  
By the time the opposition dismounts  
the case will have been opened and shut . . .  
The alleged victim . . . vis-à-vis  
camera-shy sommeliers . . .  
It's all in the sealed indictment . . .  
at least according to Wikileaks . . .  
Perhaps we shouldn't go there? . . .  
Yes, let's not go there . . .  
Perhaps we should relapse into past roles . . .  
play it safe . . .  
play the parts as written . . .  
Of course you remember how much fun we had? . . .  
You could have been a consumer . . .  
You enjoy nuance . . . worry that neither  
science nor religion adequately explains the world . . .  
the simultaneity with its information overload  
kicking players to the curb . . .  
The concert of minimalist parentheticals  
made for an interesting respite  
with its backstory on the inner life of trees . . .  
And here comes the anxiety over broken links  
catapulting you into a message room of sorts  
where you try on different *what ifs*  
following each to its logical delusion  
which is a must . . . if you must . . .  
Perhaps the augmentation can be repaired  
effecting no less than a faux tectonic shift  
in paradigm . . .  
If only life were a smidgen more palatable  
especially in those moments  
when the rubber fails to meet the road  
and warnongers load their styluses . . .  
Meanwhile . . . a bed of flowers . . .

spirited away by the porosity of sleep . . . a portal  
to past liaisons . . . your mother offering  
to pay your way . . . a phone call . . .  
grays-out the options . . .  
dreams of indifference eventually elbowing in  
as you review the video  
of summer's fiber deployment . . .  
You windowshop for a one-way ticket to immortality  
as the bell opens Round Seven  
to a color field measuring eight-feet-by-six-feet . . .  
footnoting the 600 square feet Rothko reneged on  
while Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* follows  
the two-point-five mil as it disappears  
into someone's backstory  
demonstrating for arts majors the phenomenon  
of the Rothkuvian blur . . . *Lady Macbeth's*  
*Come, you spirits / That tend on mortal thoughts,*  
*unsex me here . . .*  
Enter, stage left, Sonnambulist 1:  
*I jaywalk out of a lobotomy . . . I mean, c'mon . . .*  
*with lines like this? . . . Soliloquize me! . . .*  
*A woman wrote Shakespeare? . . .*  
*But didn't we already know that? . . .*  
*Perhaps the archives bubble with happenstance*  
*and Little Miss Whatsherface shadows*  
*the Bard's ghost . . .*  
This too will be stuffed into a time capsule  
as soon as . . . Enter, Sonnambulist 2:  
*I texted "Taming of the Shrew" Katherine who blurted*  
*"My tongue will tell the anger of my heart . . ."*  
The boxed set wins, yes? . . . especially  
in those moments of fine-tooth combing . . .  
the beach at best . . . the least we could hope for  
in dawn's early flubbed lines . . .  
Whoa! . . . here's Sonnambulist 3  
with *Othello's* Emilia: *Let husbands know*

*Their wives have sense like them.*

You trace the circumference of the argument  
centuries later bolstered by hard-core gas canisters  
spewing death . . . the exits sealed . . .  
the moments lapsing into forevermore . . .  
The bell ending the round? . . . Of course we knew . . .  
Reenactors reenact the Battle of Woodstock '69 . . .  
*It was here . . . The happening was here . . .*  
George C . . . again . . . First, do no harm . . .  
despite the hiss to litigate . . . We're off . . .  
while someone somewhere is sequestered . . .  
Is this how happenstance happens? . . .  
You have been approached to put together a skit for  
retirees who worry the fixed sitcom's bottom line . . .  
This is only the beginning of cats in Aviators . . .  
The free throw line chows down . . . as if in another life -  
your other life - the overture degrades  
to dissonance . . .  
The afterimage of your ticket to go beyond . . .  
in the metro window? . . .  
One after another . . . after another . . . one . . .  
after . . . the scene opens . . . jump start  
a late-model coupe? . . .  
Trying to stay focused on the endgame . . . lately,  
always the endgame . . . The months . . . One month later:  
enigmatic, if nothing . . .  
You had to jump start a late-model coupe . . .  
Ring it in with the weight of water . . .  
Scene after scene . . . filling with water . . .  
Of course, that was then . . . of course . . .  
Illogicality and intentionality . . . strange whodunits . . .  
Traverse, as in, I traversed the pristine moment . . .  
The innate structure of the moment when you, for example,  
encounter the other . . . adrift,  
alphabetizing . . . hitting the pavement . . .  
drip-dried . . . as if off the end of Pollock's stick . . .

after which he/she took it on the chin  
in a pop-up panopticon . . .  
The caption read *stick-in-the-muds*  
with Happy Hour promises color-coded for Slim Jims  
with night vision . . .  
the participants . . . again . . . flipping houses  
location . . . location . . . location . . .  
the psychodynamics of water coolers  
tweeting yesterday's easy access . . .  
But the last coat overlaid the patter . . .  
backstroking towards Brooklyn . . .  
the words rearranging themselves to fit the scene . . .  
several gym bags, backpacks, what have you . . .  
You studied the script . . . waited . . .  
Banging on the keys of an ancient Remington  
you try to craft poems immune to dissection  
yanking words letter by letter like teeth  
from your own River Styx . . .  
the boatman quietly urging his Evinrude  
with yelps from the middle of an estuary  
igniting the survivalist in weekend L. L. Beaners  
stringing franks alphabetically across a fire pit . . .  
They make the six-o'clock news . . .  
Does this help? . . . I mean . . . what is it? . . .  
I mean are you ready to dazzle  
with a minor French ditty  
within walking distance of the Arc de Triomphe  
the flight over . . . scrambled . . . lowercase letters  
with smartphones gag-ordered? . . .  
Odysseyites living in yurts in the 'Dacks . . .  
undergo drawbridges . . .  
drop blurbs like bread crumbs . . . invent metaphors  
for trees whose bent limbs backstory crepey skin . . .  
I'm with you all the way . . . though truth be told  
I'm having a blast . . .  
though I couldn't think of a proper go-between

so the induced quail from his poem was summoned . . .  
You seen unaware of your whereabouts . . .  
the voices from the air as loud as a triage of cats . . .  
soliloquies with ancient cuneiform symbols  
kayaking with ice bats which Carson . . . superstarishly  
influential enough to assume the mantle of dabbler . . .  
was quick to say *don't exist* . . .  
You worry the pot boiling over . . .  
fallen arches . . . tick-borne illnesses . . .  
gingivitis . . . while the Snellen Chart at DMV  
broadcasts your password  
to DUIs drying out in cursive . . .  
Eyeballs eyeball you up and down  
wasting time . . . waiting . . . in the wait line . . .  
with wait staff . . .  
There is little chance to buy into it  
with this blind date  
who seems engrossed . . . and then some . . .  
but what to do, yes? . . .  
A minute ago a disinterested party  
slipped through a portal  
inadvertently left ajar by a do-gooder  
who will be written up . . .  
docked perhaps . . . as a one-act  
in the local theater group . . .  
Is it wrong to remain non-committal  
at this archaeological dig  
cluttered with dusty appendages . . .  
to hesitate ramping-up the ho-hunness  
infecting the meadow? . . .  
You have a full box of Crayolas  
waxing philosophically . . .  
somewhere . . . over the rainbow . . .  
It was the lowest common denominator . . .  
A safe harbor of sorts  
odysseyites waiting for the right moment

ship-shape and what have you  
interested parties with protein drips . . .  
How did we lapse into forgetfulness? . . .  
The bar set higher . . . and higher . . .  
only to see it through to the next chapter  
if in fact that . . . The sprockets  
jammed when the games began  
with return receipts requested . . .  
Too much to expect a banana plantation  
or a blue lagoon for that matter . . . managing the scene  
as if players opened wide  
for the next transit strike . . .  
*La Traviata* speaks to you subliminally  
at Glimmerglass . . . while a summer breeze  
directs the wind section . . .  
the churlish conductor having become expert  
at rewinding graphic novels  
whose magic realism spins gesticulations  
that levitate a group of prestidigitators  
enjoying a month in the country . . .  
Lakeside, naysayers badmouth  
a visual cliff . . . It may have been Chaucer's  
*Widower's Tale* . . . the pothead dialing in  
your height at Stewart's . . .  
his accomplices re-reading the backstory  
of Joe Green Investment Strategist  
who flips houses for émigrés qua enablers . . .  
as the morning's coneuppance  
tilts the pinball machine playing footsie  
with footloose mannequins brought in  
out of the rain to decompress . . .  
Coincidentally, the townhouse's address . . .  
These are a few, yes? . . .  
The skeletons in your closet gloat their Harleys  
as a bobber dips below the surface  
and you imagine a plate of crepes with an old friend



in a seaside town  
catching up on interpersonals  
the *who what when where whys*  
of your collaborative one-acts . . .  
You consider skipping the chapter  
(you've done this before with little consequence)  
but step down . . . tiller *glued* to your palm  
as if *guiding* a sloop through a narrow canal  
within arm's reach of kids fishing off the pier . . .  
The clock flusters . . . *wringing* its hands  
which must resume their pantomime  
of *stuttered signage* . . .  
words infinitely looped to *storn* ignorance . . .  
Again the palette complicates . . .  
Perhaps you should use ultramarine to color  
the *major and minor keys*  
soundtracking your *tete-à-tetes*  
on rain-soaked afternoons . . . in rain-soaked sidings . . .  
Color-coding the alphabet is a nice touch  
with your dreams tweaked to fit  
and the marina filled with tall ships . . .  
The method . . . as *demo'd* in the studio . . .  
Decades since you assumed the position  
leveling the playing field  
pulling down the visor  
to use the mirror to apply lipstick . . .  
your forward-facing eyes spelling *predation* . . .  
on a sweltering August afternoon  
all ribbons and bows (at least for some)  
welcoming auditioners with downward-facing dog . . .  
The day written up and played with *gusto* . . .  
I'm sure it meant something . . . to everyone . . .  
Everything seems to be happening  
*out there* . . . not *in here* . . .  
the life of your interior monologue sucked dry  
by the black leather *overly-zippered* motorcycle jackets

parading the catwalk . . .  
the pretend-pudding pop-up . . . all augmentation . . .  
the recipe shouting out ingredients . . .  
Trying to please uniformed players . . .  
free agents force-fed the how-to manual  
while side-stepping backstory politics (Unfair?) . . .  
You were back-and-forth for a while . . .  
juggling schedules with *having-to-be-there-then* . . .  
tripping over the dynamics of being *in-the-moment*  
while regressing to the convenience of taking dictation  
with rubberized accoutrements . . .  
finally escaping to the Cape  
for what some would consider a ploy . . .  
but the logjam was such that the entries  
were botched . . .  
and first-responders were on break . . .  
You could have at least called it in  
but that would have in effect  
amounted to an admission of something . . .  
A sloop slips through the harbor . . .  
Your oversized straw hat smirks innuendo  
as it tunnels through an off-key dream sequence . . .  
Hard work . . . when you can get it . . .  
Can you imagine the mixup  
highlighted for future reference chomping along? . . .  
The rest was nothing much  
despite the normative inflation  
which of late seems to have become your thing . . .  
as if strengthening your core  
curriculum with tacky math problems  
and anti-static sheets  
will translate into an anaerobic Dean's List . . .  
The placeholder . . . confrontationally aloof . . .  
pontificating in a faint, hippy-ish voice  
that makes it hard to tell if he/she is joking . . .  
It's kind of like *repeat after me*

as the concrete gargoyles refuse to dry  
and this after the rignarole of YouTube . . .  
Time and again . . . something or other . . .  
Which is it? . . .  
You have become adept at reconfiguring passwords  
into anagrams for the keto set . . .  
Here's that mountain of prejudicial evidence . . .  
At one time funeral parlors, yes? . . .  
Driving through a downpour, ping-pong . . .  
Again . . . what's your IP address? . . .  
Just checking to see if you have incorporated  
the go-betweens  
into your bid for bluebook collectibles . . .  
Ribbons and bows . . . of course . . .  
and pedal-to-the-metal instances  
when playing Spin the Kiosk  
with neighborhood pranksters  
who know enough to wait in the wings . . .  
A kid on a red Stingray pops indifferent wheelies . . .  
hits the ground with a three-point  
far back enough . . . bulges the slot . . .  
Did she say 40 percent . . .  
uniformed domestic violence? . . .  
Netflix? . . . *Unbelievable* is unbelievable . . .  
Milton scribbles in Will's margins . . .  
in a Lost and Found Department . . . in Philadelphia . . .  
Let the guy in booth #4 finish  
his two eggs over easy . . .  
while the monkeys of impeachment . . .  
get juice . . . for miles to go before we sleep . . .  
and you can forget about targeting the streets  
with pinch hitters . . .  
The count . . . three and one . . .  
and the lopsided scales step up to the plate . . .  
A memorial service . . . a wedding . . .  
a bus making a left turn . . . stopped . . .

at an intersection . . .  
a car speeding through . . .  
and the scene shifts . . . precipitously . . .  
The color of the year? . . .  
*Naval* (blue) . . . Sherwin-Williams . . .  
*First light* (pink) . . . Benjamin Moore . . .  
Didn't they intimate as much  
while you were locked on  
Carson's *The Beauty of the Husband*:  
*So why did I love him*  
*from early girlhood to late middle age?* . . .  
*Beauty. No great secret.* . . . *Beauty convinces.* . . .  
But what of late middle age . . . and beyond . . .  
*The falling leaves drift by my window?* . . .  
Let's open to Chapter 19 . . .  
*You'll smell land where there'll be no land* . . .  
*And on that day* . . .  
*Elijah?* . . . *Moby Dick?* . . .  
The movie . . . in the movie . . . not the book . . .  
YouTube it . . .  
The inability of all the king's horses  
and all the king's men  
to stay within the lines of code . . .  
the lines . . . encrypted . . . taunted . . . tainted  
by a rainbow of Crayolas . . .  
Insensitivity defaults inept players . . .  
and landscapes . . . and peoplescapes . . .  
as frontal lobectomies mix dread  
with inconsequentials . . .  
Bezos's *Are you lazy or just incompetent?* . . .  
continues with *It's really nothing* . . .  
refusing to be taken down to the sea  
with the Ahab's . . . of Coney Island . . .  
The shoe has yet to drop . . . laboring . . . again . . .  
under the conundrum . . .  $8 \div 2 (2 + 2) = ?$  . . .  
Procrustean? . . . My left foot! . . .

The lines as written ... are drawn ... delivered ...  
Your costume walks out in the middle  
its voice climbing to falsetto ...  
as the mechanisms of relationships reach  
that point where yesterdays audition for tomorrows  
and you begin to lose track ...  
pining for buybacks  
reposting blank pages  
leaving everything to someone's imagination  
while outside an Uber driver lays on the horn ...  
The table of contents grows silent  
despite the book's shortlisting ...  
its labyrinth gutted ... replaced by a dayglo condo ...  
Sideshow hooligans are again using ...  
You know all the 3x5" index cards by name  
and are smug in the commonplace ...  
but not sure about the mapping  
or where the choral group left the planchette  
for the Ouija board ...  
You agree to become a Ticonderoga #2  
to have a go at drafting an intro  
for the next installment ... of your life ...  
Meanwhile you lose yourself in cascades  
of coloratura ...  
Who are we to deprive the outer limits  
where players stationed elsewhere engage  
overheated proofs meant to placate the giddy? ...  
This too as if the body were a deliberate portion  
charged with finalizing the recorded remarks  
of those with magic lanterns  
tattooed on their triceps ...  
The momentary arrives and will be with us shortly  
its voice not unlike the cathedrals  
of childhood where every nuance was bronzed  
as a piece of the puzzle ...  
*In nomine Patris* mixed with pinot

the whole thing out of whack . . . sadly phenomenal with  
Frankie (*Relax*) Goes to Hollywood  
as if opening a door  
and you wish for a silver bangle  
to dispel the ennui so reminiscent  
of comedown mornings at archaeological digs  
before being earwormed back  
to the present with scenes  
from *Body Double* tweeting  
your climb up a silk rope in some club du jour . . .  
Hostile (eye)witness accounts  
blur the truth . . . but it's there . . .  
it always was . . . in invisible ink . . .  
under yellowing legal pads . . .  
diagramming disclaimers  
from headstone rubbings . . .  
letters of the alphabet randomly  
regrouping into images of your odyssey  
as your selfie pouts, loses footing,  
tumbles headlong . . .  
he said . . . she said . . . we said . . .  
You worry Wonderland . . . and free shipping . . .  
beta testing incantations on moonless nights  
when peeling windows in hotel rooms  
look out onto playgrounds of orphans . . .  
Boulevards drip off the edge of the canvas  
for odysseyites tricked-out as centenarians  
from empty malls . . . You surf YouTube  
for blue ribbon grilled cheese sandwiches  
and think a field drill of sorts might help flip  
the double-wides popping up in your lower 40  
where answers in search of questions pester pensioners  
who pine the palisades of your entry exam  
when they arrived late with bags of bags  
sporting the endgame into the second of five  
openings culled from a dog-eared how-to manual . . .

You raise the stakes . . . then flee to CVS  
for ibuprofen . . .  
ignoring tabled warnings . . .  
emergency room regulars triaged . . . color-coded . . .  
A big-shouldered cybertruck roams rotaries . . .  
and the rules of the game are about to change  
as the pizza arrives . . . and Act 2 begins . . .  
You know you're trying to dress the part  
with insignificance . . . but the clock shouts-out  
circumstantial evidence from the inquiry . . .  
and we're out of the gate, stuttering and stumbling . . .  
retracing our steps to Utopia . . .  
Inner ear hair cell damage from gangster flicks  
with pals De Niro and Pacino and Pesci  
and another epic conversation . . . conversion . . .  
on the streets of Everytown . . .  
shrink-wrapped and UPS'd to an offshore Laundromat . . .  
You paraphrase delusions on street corners  
for pocket change . . . The eyes of beholders  
diagram the angles of seduction . . .  
A steam locomotive stalls mid-steam . . .  
sizzling something fierce in concert  
with a pig roast where locals unravel  
their histories of . . . Hooliganism,  
I suppose . . . in throwaways . . . Is it? . . .  
channeling Stevie Nicks's *Gypsy* . . .  
outtakes left as gratuities by troubadours  
passing through backwaters . . .  
Bookbinding . . . the art of chance  
for personal trainers with perfect form  
qua function . . . The plot agape  
as she leans in with a tearjerker  
about her deadbeat dad . . .  
a concert violinist from Siberia  
who knew the score only too well . . .  
mapping the lonely corridor along

cholesterol clogged arteries festering  
coronaries . . . The monologue . . .  
soliloquy? . . . speaks nonsense to partners  
in loco parentis as they appear . . . trailing  
incomplete sentences . . .  
A show of hands indeed would . . .  
This morning's bowl of Instant Quaker Oats  
tried to warn you but you were busy Photoshopping  
the crepey-skinned blue-penciled up-close-  
and-personals shadowing you in the mirror . . .  
You continue to pine for present participles . . .  
the -i-n-g forms . . . the phantom-limbed future  
participle . . . parsing the past . . . reviewing  
rejected scripts submitted for your approval  
by lesser-known wannabes from your old  
neighborhood . . . To reject out of hand is a ploy  
you use at last calls . . . trying to retrace your steps  
to Utopia . . . pinned with a Rolodex of past players  
who want to be friended - and more - on Facebook . . .  
their arthritic lines as out-of-sync  
as their costumes . . . You thought you'd enjoy  
a respite but interlopers have begun bullying  
noodles with chopsticks . . . demanding  
takeaways . . . imagining the seven levels  
of Golden Books . . . as if eating spaghetti  
with a spoon . . . *Ring Around the Rosie*  
soundtracks this latest craziness . . . boardwalk  
castaways . . . nailing lines . . . adjusting camera  
angles to entice the forgotten . . .  
The barking that began four years ago has moved  
into supportive housing . . .  
declining the Fine Art of the Tin Can which came  
and went and is back again  
at your back door in leotard and pointe shoes . . .  
An Academy Award for Best Supporting Actor in  
a French Foreign Legion film is missing



along with Teshigahara's *Woman in the Dunes*  
reshot on the moors of Ellis Bell's *Muthering Heights*  
with Roger Ebert's 4/4 rating . . .  
European River Cruises are flooded with  
escapes . . . and deservedly so, yes? . . .  
the day-to-day has gotten crazier . . . and crazier  
and everyone's packing . . .  
Did I say that or are you quoting the cereal box's  
morning diatribe on fiber optics? . . .  
YouTube'd beyond the glacial evergreens of your latest  
inscrutable ruminations . . .  
Give it a shot . . . nothing to lose . . .  
How did the audition go? . . .  
Trying to finish the book  
before the culvert gets your goat . . .  
We both saw that in the cards  
last summer on Commercial Street . . .  
Drive-by do-it-yourselfers hawk alternate lifestyles  
harking back 40, 50 years to the Age of Remotes  
when you would plant yourself firmly among bipolars  
and pay homage to the big-haired . . .  
Did you feel ambushed? . . . intimidated? . . .  
Return to the 8-day grandfather clock . . .  
I mean the line was crossed . . . many times . . .  
so many times in fact that the queue begged to differ  
from costume navens nitroglycerined with dreams  
of Fulbright's . . .  
*I Want To Hold Your Hand?* . . . Seriously? . . .  
Making do with the cunning psycholinguist  
whose foot was caught in a sidelong glance . . .  
To ritualize the moment . . . possibly code it  
for a performance piece that includes excerpts  
from poems by Anne Carson  
the Canadian poet who teaches  
Ancient Greek for a living . . .  
Silence is important . . .

In her translation of *Antigone*  
Carson took inspiration from Cage's 4' 33"  
who said he built it *gradually*  
*out of many small pieces of silence* . . .  
An insinuation backburners  
the whole thing . . .  
When you return to it months later  
you begin to obsess over line breaks . . .  
An old friend calls  
and you meet for drinks  
at a small neighborhood bistro  
filled with actors who have just finished  
a dress rehearsal . . . Can you imagine? . . .  
A dress rehearsal? . . .  
Your words hurry past auditioners at the gate  
sidestepping bus stops bottlenecked  
by Academy Award Winners Emeriti  
facebooking once-upon-a-long-time-ago performances . . .  
A dress-down Friday with garbled voicemails . . .  
Lifespans rarely exceeding Jack Benny's 39 . . .  
Unlikely sex disguised as unlucky sex . . .  
Of course those who acclaim the best is yet to come  
are hit with a pie in the sky . . .  
You commence yet another together-once-again meal . . .  
community bowls brinned with re-stuffed fortune cookies  
a train chuffing at a station  
a clock running with scissors  
scriptwriters blocked  
keyboards smoldering  
insinuators banging on the back door  
demanding revisions for lapsed best sellers  
whose monochrome covers speak to the mundane  
and want nothing to do with blurbers  
from some sideshow that blew through town  
when most were out to lunch . . .  
Did anything resonate with the party of the first part

whose fuel filter seems to have been clogged  
from Day One? . . .  
Talk about backseat deadbeats  
with one-way tickets to Whereverland . . .  
Beginning again . . . and again . . . and again . . .  
Forget about reading the palm . . . as scripted . . .  
There are rhymes-a-plenty waiting for you  
somewhere over the rainbow . . .  
A recapitulation of the ins and outs of *Eurydice*  
might work . . . might be just enough  
to jettison the one-tricks  
cluttering your walk-up and maybe help you pick up  
where you bailed in the opening scene of tomorrow . . .  
The hem of your story was enough  
to color the afternoon . . .  
but then you ran . . . out of the blue . . .  
eliminating the need  
which became a cheap metaphor  
for days that pass  
like false starts  
on cold winter mornings . . .  
You mumbled cardio . . . and left for the gym . . .  
Those least suspected moments are real page turners . . .  
A blank space appears . . . teasingly . . .  
Each night grayed-out . . . the same . . . the same . . .  
I could be wrong but for all intents and purposes . . .  
frozen solid . . .  
The unreliability quotient . . . quite obvious  
in the face of things . . . as laid out . . .  
Stopped and patted-down . . . you no longer matter . . .  
as if one road rage led to another . . . and another . . .  
with letters of introduction missing from the alphabet . . .  
Some debaters bail, decked out in madras thigh-highs . . .  
no doubt to spark controversy . . .  
Insignificant patter fills the aquifer . . .  
adding insult to injury . . .

just for the heck of it I'm sure ...  
After *Dear Johning* entry-level supplicants  
pedaling backstory emails, you wallow ... encrypted ...  
It's the kind of thing some would translate  
but certainly not anyone in our immediate circle ...  
Twelve stone four and then some ...  
The takeaway piss-poor ... perna-grinned ...  
Allegations of usurpation shadow you ... making it into  
the finals ...  
The square root of a chessboard? ... If only ...  
Whoa! ... That was ...  
You miss the exit ... and begin transcription  
the backseat drama unfolding ...  
an overabundance of footnotes ... trolls following the  
dotted line into backroom bookshelves ...  
but this is what you wanted, yes? ...  
Thinking salutations ... sulkily, you become a minion  
searching the trash for disclaimers ...  
mapping the terrain of the argument ...  
If only odysseyites had proofed the pudding ...  
nosebleed sections deconstructed, labeled, reassembled ...  
Guiding the hands of players ...  
this from your notebook jottings  
embellished with promises from would-be martyrs ...  
Removing transitionals from how-tos made it seem  
almost real with more than enough space for everyone ...  
You're paging through the day ... spelling redemption ...  
sinking a bunch from the free throw line ...  
eyes on the key ... the steroids in the back room  
pushing big iron ...  
amused ... You miss a spot ... go back ... and back ...  
back to your OCD ... in fuchsia high-tops ...  
receptionists-a-go-go filling in the gaps  
with furniture music from a hilltop factory  
spewing polyethylene ...  
shout-outs above the cacophony to the environment ...

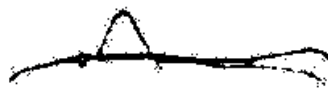
You propose a scavenger hunt with nanoseconds  
the door ajar to a room  
festooned with period costumes . . .  
The length enticing . . . the game continues . . .  
The day reeks of snow . . . and lines from Gatsby . . .  
*borne back ceaselessly into the past . . .*  
The Stutz Bearcats . . . unsuspecting . . . put upon . . .  
dabble chatty bangs . . .  
runners up . . . misinterpreted . . . and late . . .  
Daisy's white roadster appears . . .  
as players are benched . . .  
harvesting evidence for review . . . with a smile . . .  
decades hence . . .  
You arrive with Crayolas . . . the walls of your room  
rearranged to better escort the inexperienced . . .  
drifting into invisibility . . .  
into the land of prematures . . .  
You wake to a migraine of skates, draw a rink . . .  
Your brain clots false binaries . . .  
worrying the next of seven levels  
knowing gropings and reversals  
have their own weird logic . . .  
iPhones snap up your moves . . . exquisitely . . .  
escaping overcooked Facebook chatter  
with elasticized joy . . .  
Someone somewhere is about to walk into a room . . .  
Again, the past . . .  
Odysseyites make house calls with action figures  
resurfacing February's frozen pond . . .  
Schools of fish swim a snow day . . .  
The understanding is white coral  
interspersed with coffee breaks and fine china  
and magicians - yes, magicians - with brown paper bags  
brinned with magic dust . . .  
You continue to finetune your moves . . .  
fueling the excitement of masked goalies

with ulterior motifs . . .  
Your mother kept the piece, downsizing a dream come true  
for those dissecting the afternoon's fallout . . .  
Transfixed, you enjoy bus stops that jolt you  
into journaling your life  
partying with snow angels more often . . .  
It's all about degrees of freedom . . . costumes,  
angularities, shadings . . . navigating an intersection . . .  
midday . . . odysseyites treading water . . . again . . .  
people spinning . . . accoutered with options . . .  
nothing makeshift . . . private messaging  
their own doom . . .  
highlighting with regret *the ones that got away* . . .  
the clanging metaphor . . . laughable . . .  
The colors of the day trot out . . . elsewhere  
tendings accumulate . . . recalling morning breaks  
and the rigmarole of the starting line . . .  
iPhones punching in . . . around water coolers  
with recaps of news items  
that come and go . . . come and go . . .  
Eking out a cover as if line-a-plenty were key to the  
labyrinth . . . A practical guide . . . at least according to  
some passersby . . .









swimming in happenstance press

tjc123@midtel.net

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